

LIBRARY



129 120

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY









THE WORLD CRISIS  
AND  
JEWISH SURVIVAL

*By the Same Author*

RELIGION IN A CHANGING WORLD

MESSIANIC SPECULATIONS IN ISRAEL

THE DEMOCRATIC IMPULSE IN JEWISH HISTORY

AND  
JEWISH SURVIVAL

*A GROUP OF ESSAYS*

*By*

ABBA HILLEL SILVER



RICHARD R. SMITH  
NEW YORK            1941

Published by RICHARD R. SMITH  
120 East 39th Street, New York, N. Y.

*All rights reserved. No part of this  
book may be reproduced in any form  
without permission of the publisher.*

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
BY J. J. LITTLE & IVES COMPANY, NEW YORK

*To the men and women of the fellowship of  
The Temple of Cleveland in whose midst I  
have been privileged to learn and to teach.*



## P R E F A C E

The five essays in this volume constitute a sort of unpremeditated summary of views, on major problems of Jewish life and destiny, which I have expressed frequently in recent years both by means of the written and the spoken word. These essays were written at various times for special occasions. The first and third essays were written for the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1939 and 1935 respectively. The "Rediscovery of Judaism" was read before the convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1939. The fourth essay, "In the Midst of Many Peoples," is a compendium of the papers which I presented at the Harvard Summer School Conference in 1940. The last essay, "The Prophet and His People," is the Dudleian Lecture which I gave at Harvard in the Spring of 1940.

I have not attempted to organize these essays systematically but, placed alongside of each other, they will blend, I trust, into some unity of spirit and outlook and will present a not too inconsistent approach to some of the basic realities of Jewish experience.

In preparing these essays for publication I have largely expanded and revised them. Two were entirely rewritten.

The war which is now shaking our world will affect Jews and Judaism radically, regardless of its outcome. It will change the face of the entire world. No people and no culture will escape. It is impossible to see clearly into the future. Some opinions and judgments which are here expressed will, I am sure, be refuted and nullified by the revolutionary events of tomorrow. I believe, however, that the basic conclusions touching the tangled problems of our existence will be vindicated in the future as they were in the past. It is not in ignorance of the fateful possibilities of the long, suspended crisis of our day that these essays were written, but rather in full recognition of them, but also in full and unshaken faith in the deep, quiet channels of strength which move silently beneath the surface twists and whirls of circumstance, and which bear our lives steadily onward to their appointed destinies.

A. H. S.

*May 15, 1941*

## CONTENTS

THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL . . . . .	13
THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM . . . . .	53
ISRAEL . . . . .	91
IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES . . . . .	143
THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE . . . . .	194



THE WORLD CRISIS  
AND  
JEWISH SURVIVAL



## The World Crisis and Jewish Survival

### I

WHAT makes the present crisis so grave for the Jewish people is the fact that it is a *world* crisis, not a localized disturbance and one in which the Jew alone is involved. Were the disasters of our day limited to the Jewish people, Jews could face them with much less apprehension. "Every affliction in which Israel and the other nations of the earth share is indeed an affliction; that of Israel alone is not."<sup>1</sup> It is only those crises in human history which shake all things to their very foundations—the Crusades, for example, or the Black Death, or the World War—which also profoundly and disastrously affect Jewish life.

The world crisis is neither localized nor of short duration. It is the agony of a whole epoch, like the Thirty Years War, the Napoleonic Wars, or the era which preceded the American Civil War. The present crisis did not begin with Hitler, or Mussolini, or Lenin. It is not the result of the

<sup>1</sup> *Mid. R. Deut.* 2.14.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

Great War. The Great War was a phase of it, just as have been all the wars and revolutions and depressions which have followed it.

Nor is the crisis limited to one department of social life. It penetrates all. It is a severe and prolonged crisis in the economic, political and international life of the world. Above all, it is a spiritual and moral crisis of frightful dimensions. "The whole head is ailing, and the whole heart is sick."

Capitalism is breaking up into new forms, like Feudalism at the close of the Middle Ages, and the transition is proving even more violent. Democracy which flourished for more than a century in the congenial climate of *laissez-faire* economics and the confidence of a triumphant middle class is proving inadequate to the emergencies of a relentless class struggle which industrial and financial capitalism have brought about. Democracy and liberalism are abdicating in many parts of the world in favor of dictatorship and regimentation. This throw-back to antidemocratic forms of government which seems to be inevitable when economic classes are determined to fight it out, is being rationalized into ideologies, some of them outrageously immoral and vicious. Censorship to throttle opposing opinion and propaganda to persuade and confound men into ready acquiescence are destroying both the processes and objectives of humanistic education. Nationalism, as the principle of self-determination, which triumphed in the

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

Allied victory in the Great War, and which logically should have led to eager international co-operation, to an effective League of Nations and to the protection of minorities has contracted into political isolationism and economic autarchy. The Western World has never been as fragmentized and disintegrated as it is today. Minorities are again being exploited and shamefully used as pawns in a game of power politics. Racialism is ravaging our world. The idea of race—which, except as it is used ideally to arouse men to nobler ways of life and service by an appeal to a noble ancestral past, has always been the warrant or occasion for hatred, exploitation and war among men—has turned into something fraudulent and shamelessly immoral. In its name governments have disfranchised blocs of their own citizens, degraded, despoiled, tortured and exiled them.

The brave experiment which was made at the end of the World War, and which was to be mankind's atonement for the war, to organize the nations of the earth for peace, has been wrecked and defiled. The vision of a world united and made secure in law, in which the weak as well as the strong nations would be free to live their independent and unmolested lives, has vanished. In place of collective security and international co-operation has come again an almost complete political *bouleversement*. One hears again the old feral snarl of conquest and invasion. The old and

dangerous devices of power balancing and regional military pacts have been revived. Over all is war and the shadow of war, darkening the lives of men and nations, paralyzing their normal activities, distorting their outlooks and confounding their reason. The wealth of nations is being drained off into armaments, and national energies are all harnessed to war preparedness or war prosecution. Aggressor and nonaggressor nations, alike, are caught up in a mad stampede to increase their armaments. This is done at the cost of lowered standards of living, increased taxation, poverty, the retardation of social improvements and the postponement of a final solution of the problems of mass unemployment, want and insecurity.

International morality seems to be nonexistent. A brazen political opportunism contemptuously violates the rights of peoples and the sanctities of covenants and treaties, and employs all forms of intrigue, deception and terrorization. Gangsterism is the new norm in international affairs. Crimes against nations and minorities are condoned or ignored or dismissed as domestic affairs. In the name of peace, and under the pretext of appeasement, shameful victories, at the expense of smaller nations, have gone to powerful aggressors by default, free and independent peoples have been strangled, and helpless minorities have been turned over to plunder and destruction.

A whole continent of ideals has dropped out of

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

our world, like some lost Atlantis—the unalienable rights of man, the sanctity of the individual, the freedom of human mind, the right of dissent, tolerance, brotherhood, liberty, equality, peace. In many parts of the world, these ideals are now regarded as black heresy or treason. In other parts, they are still regarded as quite respectable, but nonetheless shabby and cumbersome heirlooms of the past, something of an annoyance, and considerably in the way.

In their place, a romantic, and intellectually debauched Fascism has proclaimed a violently oppositional set of ideals, derived from a peculiar synthesis of pseudo nationalism, pseudo socialism and pseudo racism—Force, Blood and Soil, *Volkstum*, Obedience, Leadership, Co-ordination.

Many men, even among the intellectuals, have been eager to listen to these new ideals and have been captivated by them. They seem to have grown weary of the excessive relativism, subjectivism, scepticism and laicism of the so-called modern spirit, a spirit which sees all sides of every issue, and quenches all urges to action in a sea of latitudinarianism. They have come to long for compelling, dogmatic convictions, and a positive, unqualified and unquestioning faith. Many men have wearied of excessive individualism. They want an element of mandate and authority in their lives, and they seek psychic sanctuary in mass solidarity. In times of excessive social decomposition,

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

men are ready to purchase discipline and order even at the price of tyranny. It is difficult for men who labor under hard and prolonged strain to remember that an element of disillusionment and glamorless realism is an essential attribute of any mature civilization. Periods of political and economic upheaval give rise to ardent expectancies and to numerous forms of extravagant romanticism. Vague, emotionally charged and highly confident dogmas override all forms of classic culture. In place of the disciplined, humanistic, intellectual and libertarian motives of the classic tradition, there come the ecstatic, imagistic, primitive and authoritarian motives. The concept of human progress through the conscious and disciplined evolution of the individual in a freely organized society succumbs to a sharp introversion, to a rapturous sinking and surrender to infantile race memories, to herd *mores*, to turgid, "folkist" yearnings, and to an eagerness to liquidate the ego in some exalted group Nirvana. The famous romantics of Germany, from Schlegel and Schelling on were always authoritarian and anti-liberal, and always hankered after some regressive pre-Christian, Germanic heathendom. The Nazis are their legitimate descendants.

Such is the world crisis today, a vast and prolonged convulsion whose end is nowhere in sight.

## II

Such a crisis was bound to affect Jewish life most adversely. The widespread suffering and discontent resulting from the appalling economic dislocations were destined to demand some visible and personal agent upon whom to place the onus of responsibility and guilt. No readier scapegoat is ever available than a defenseless minority. The beneficiaries of the old system, frightened by the rising tide of revolutionary resentment, attempted craftily to deflect from themselves this punitive resentment and to channel it towards an already disfavored group—the Jewish group. They popularized the fiction that sinister and conspiratorial forces have misused an otherwise beneficent capitalism. There is a good, wholesome *schaffendes*, Christian capitalism, and *per contra*, there is a baneful, destructive, *raffendes*, Jewish capitalism. Also, there are good patriotic, nationally-minded Christian bankers, and on the other hand, there are the unpatriotic, warmongering, international Jewish bankers. They also hit upon the strategy of discrediting every progressive movement, agency and law which threatened their vested interests by calling it Communistic, and by branding Communism as something alien and Jewish. In this manner an existing prejudice was capitalized and affixed as an odious tabu label to

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

the whole complex of advanced social ideals and attitudes in the modern world. By means of this new propaganda technique, the Jewish group has been made a universal object of fear and hate. A sinister aura has been cast around the Jewish worker, merchant, and professional man, quite like the aura which religious bigotry succeeded in casting around the Jew in the Middle Ages.

At a time of a world-wide contracting economy, when the number of men who seek jobs far exceeds the number of jobs available, and when diminishing opportunities drive work-and-career-hungry men into murderous competition, it is not only work standards which collapse, but moral standards as well. Men do not hesitate to exploit any and every advantage, however unfair, in their struggle for a living. The advantage of belonging to a dominant majority which can compel members of a minority group to relinquish economic positions is quickly and ruthlessly exploited. This is nothing new in Jewish experience. Frequently in the Middle Ages, this same strategy under a religious guise, was employed. It was a favorite expedient of Christian merchants, especially of German burghers in Poland, in their competition with Jewish merchants. Members of the middle classes and the professional classes, many of whom have come to constitute a new proletariat, are particularly unscrupulous competitors, and it is

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

within these economic ranges that so many of our people live.

In some countries, particularly in the old democracies, only social prejudices are invoked to insure economic preferences. But in other countries, the machinery of government is resorted to. The hands of the minority must be tied by law. In such instances, certain rationalizations are invented to justify what is palpably contrary to the spirit of all law and morality. A pseudoscientific theory of race is furbished up and pontifically proclaimed not only as sovereign and indisputable truth, but as the sole salvation of the state. Race is exalted into a higher law and a superior morality before which the lesser law of political equality must abdicate. Where race theories are not popular, the theory of integral nationalism is invoked. Whatever the subterfuge—race purity or national integration—the results are the same. The Jewish minority is despoiled of whatever economic position, wealth or power it may possess and the way is barred to any future economic recuperation.

The Third Reich—and as a result of the pressure of the Axis, also Italy and other countries—has carried this process to its logical conclusion—complete political disfranchisement and economic outlawry. It has determined not merely to curb the Jew, but to exterminate him, through economic strangulation or exile. In Hungary, an economic *numerous clausus* has been imposed

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

upon the Jew. In Nazi-occupied Poland, the Jewish economy is shattered and the Jews are branded outlaws within improvised ghettos. In other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the programs of politico-economic action against the Jew have varied according to the political orientation within each country and the international sphere of influence in which each country moves.

Anti-Semitism has become in our day a matter of political action not only for economic reasons—to appease the job-and-career hunger of the majority population, but also for diplomatic reasons—to realize certain imperial ambitions, and to extend political hegemony. The race theory served the Nazis well as a political weapon by means of which millions of people, Germans by race but not by nationality, were brought within the confines of the Third Reich. The seizure of Austria, Sudetenland, Memel, and Western Poland was justified on the ground of the race affinity of their inhabitants with those of Germany. Race was thus exploited for political purposes. The same Nazis are exploiting race prejudices and antagonisms to weaken the countries which lie athwart their course of empire, by fomenting discord among their inhabitants, thereby destroying their national unity and paralyzing their resistance to Nazi aggression. Anti-Semitism today is the Reich's Fifth Column—a cunning and effective weapon of imperial conquest and domination.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

This explains the amazing *missionary* character of Nazi anti-Semitism and the sustained drive behind it.

Generally speaking, the trend toward political concentration which has characterized the post-war era, has affected the status of the Jew unfavorably. More and more of economic activities and areas of national life are coming under the partial or total control of government. Government will, in the last analysis, reflect the economic interest not of a racial or national minority group within the state, but of the majority group. Unless there are strong constitutional guarantees to protect the rights of such minorities, they are likely to be brushed aside. Unfortunately, constitutional guarantees do not hold out very long against sustained social pressure. The revolutionary impatience of the forces both of the Left and the Right with the slow processes of the democratic procedure has undermined the moral authority of constitutional guarantees. In a dictatorship, the individual is stripped of all those rights which democracy declared to be inalienably his. The individual becomes subject to the will or whim of an autonomous political party in control of a rigidly co-ordinated state, and so do all minorities.

The Jew thrived best under a political system of constitutional guarantees and limited state power. This was the prevalent trend in the West-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

ern World from the time of the American Revolution to the World War. The Jew could claim his rights as an individual in a world which acknowledged that every individual, regardless of his race or class or creed, did possess definite natural rights which were his inalienably—rights which were not granted to him by the state, and which were therefore not revokable by it. With the spread in our day of the opposing doctrine of state absolutism, the position of the Jew who is everywhere a member of a defenseless and exposed minority, was bound to decline sharply. And it has so declined.

Such is the world crisis, and such has been its impact upon Jewish life. Can the Jew survive this crisis?

### III

If there is one thing which can be predicated with any degree of certainty about Jewish life, it is its complete unpredictability. Two eminent Jewish sociologists, representing sharply divergent points of view, one an assimilationist, the other a Zionist, did nevertheless agree upon one thing. Dr. Maurice Fishberg in his study of *The Jews*, wrote: "If, in addition, it is considered that history shows conclusively that as soon as the Jew is emancipated and given human rights, he always discards his separative practices and does his best

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

to assimilate, and that reactions, such as were witnessed in Spain and in other countries during mediæval ages, are at present unlikely, it is not difficult to foresee which tendency will prevail among the Jews in the near future.”<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Arthur Ruppin, writing in *The Jews of Today*, declared: “It is unthinkable that either in Europe or America anti-Semitism could ever bring about legal disabilities for Jews. Any such legislation would be a direct break with the political tradition of the nineteenth century, and no state could well take such a step. We must also remember that all anti-Jewish laws are directed against the Jews as a religious community; anti-Semitism is not directed against the Jewish religion—it is perfectly indifferent to it. It is hostile to the Jews as a race, and as promoters of certain kinds of industry and poltics. Here legislation is powerless. . . . In Europe and the United States it is easy to deal with negroes, Indians or Chinese—any child can tell the difference between these races and whites. But special treatment for Jews founded on such a basis would present insurmountable difficulties in practice. Jews, as a race, are beyond the reach of legislation, and still less can they be assailed as followers of certain branches of trade, etc., since there is today no one such branch exclusively in Jewish hands.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> M. Fishberg, *The Jews* (New York, 1911), p. 503.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Ruppin, *The Jews of Today* (New York, 1913), p. 203.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

Dr. Fishberg and Dr. Ruppin both assumed that the complete assimilation of the Jew was a foregone conclusion. One welcomed it; the other sought to forfend it by Zionism. Both men were persuaded, on the basis of their extensive studies and research, that reactions such as occurred in Spain were not likely to happen in the Western World, and that no modern state would or could pass discriminatory legislation against the Jew, based on race. But learning, logic, and statistics notwithstanding, the Nuremberg laws *were enacted*, in the year of grace 1935, in one of the most civilized countries of the world, and the reactions which took place in Spain in 1492, and the manifold tragedies of the Spanish expulsion, pale into insignificance alongside of the horrible streamlined reaction in modern Germany, and the brutal expulsion of Jews from Germany which is even now going on. Here, in the twentieth century, one can witness reaction, cold pogroms, terror and tragedy at full tide.

It is no reflection upon these scholars that they wrote as they did. They were influenced by the same optimism which characterized the entire thought-life of the Western World in the decades which preceded the first World War—an optimism which nurtured itself upon the truly remarkable achievements in every field of human endeavor, upon scientific discoveries, the popularization of education, the extension of franchise,

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

the improvement in the standard of living, and the increased facilities for intercommunication among men and nations. Few could look beyond the facade, or underneath the surface of things into the dark, bitter primordial waters below. Few could anticipate that great human documents, constitutions, and charters of liberty, long cherished and sacrificially achieved, could shrivel up overnight like some parched scroll, and few could foresee the sudden twist which a world war would give both to human destiny and to Jewish destiny.

Just as it is difficult to predict how nations will act towards the Jew in the future, so is it difficult to predict how the Jew himself will act. There is history which we ourselves make, and there is history which others make for us. Most of our political and economic history of the past twenty centuries, other hands fashioned for us. Most of our cultural and social history, we fashioned ourselves. The inner and outer forces playing upon Jewish life, however, have constantly interacted. What seems passive acceptance of influence and impact is not entirely so. Jews were never just marionettes; nor what appears to be original with us, volitional, and autochthonous, is always so. Furthermore, just as there never was a consistent and unvarying direction in the outer propulsive forces which played upon Jewish history, so there was never any consistency of action or reaction in our own inner world. It is unprofitable to over-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

simplify Jewish history. There are certain clichés about Jewish history which are universally accredited which, nevertheless, upon closer investigation, turn out to be grossly inaccurate. Thus, it is not true that persecution always helped Jewish communities to survive, and that prosperity always tended to disintegrate them. This is a form of easygoing determinism applied to Jewish history which is not borne out by the facts. Our history records many an important Jewish community which was destroyed by sharp and prolonged persecution—in Persia, Babylonia, Arabia, the Byzantine Empire, Egypt, Northern Africa, Spain, Portugal, and elsewhere. Conversely, many a Jewish community survived and retained its identity through long periods of tranquility and prosperity—in the great Diaspora of the era of the Second Temple, in Hellenistic Alexandria, in pre-Christian Rome, in the Babylonia of the early Talmudic era, in Western Europe before the Crusades, in Eastern Europe before Christianity was firmly established, in Islamic Spain, in Holland, in America, and in the British Empire. Our history also records a phenomenon of cycles: many *wadis* contain the beds of water courses which are altogether dry and desolate but which become torrential streams in the rainy season. Close students have not failed to notice how often the cycle of recuperation is repeated in our history. The "Generation of the Wilderness," whom the Psalmist

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

characterized as a despised generation and as "a people that do err in their heart" is followed by a generation which conquered Canaan. The generation whom Jeremiah charged with apostasy—"My people have forgotten Me days without number," and with treason—"for the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against Me. . . They have belied the Lord," is soon followed by the generation of Zerubbabel, which rebuilt Judea in struggle and sacrifice. The age of the Hellenizers is followed by the age of the Maccabees. The Jews of Spain whom Rabbi Solomon Alami found so deserving of censure for their materialism, their pride and their corruption, are followed by descendants, many of whom were crowned with martyrdom for their faith, by myriads who preferred exile to apostasy. The generation for whom Judah Leib Gordon sang his Hebrew songs while his heart was fearful lest he would be the last of all the Hebrew poets and his readers the last few to read Hebrew poetry, is followed by the most remarkable renaissance of the Hebrew language and culture in Jewish history.

The confluence of many factors, outer and inner, personal and impersonal, some purely fortuitous, a matter of time and place, determines whether a given Jewish community will survive a persecution or will succumb to the enticements of a welcoming alien civilization.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

Only one fact can we postulate with confidence about the history of our people. As a people, we have survived! There may be a difference of opinion as to how or why, but none as to the actual fact. We have survived—the one people that has come down intact from antiquity, that can trace an unbroken line of physical and spiritual continuity through thirty-five centuries, the one race that exemplifies in the modern world historical continuity and survival *par excellence*.

It should be borne in mind, too, that our survival transpired not in some secluded Shangri-La, sheltered from danger and attack by ramparts of impassable mountains. We did not vegetate in passivity in some quiet, sequestered land far away from the world's stern stresses and struggles. We achieved our survival in the very midst of the world's mad and murderous arenas. We were invaded. We were attacked. We were exiled. We were driven over the face of the earth. We were scattered and broken, hounded and harassed, through long and weary centuries. We clashed with great empires. We resisted mighty civilizations. We were surrounded by militant faiths which sought to absorb us or to destroy us. We are today again upon the rack in the torture chambers of the earth. Nevertheless, we survived! And, for our size, we are today the most alive and creative people in the world.

Some will call it a mere accident of history. But

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

that is an evasion, not an explanation. Such a strange accident can be accounted for only as the accidental result of ten thousand equally strange and accidental survivals in our long history. Such an explanation must tax the incredulity even of the most resolutely incredulous person.

Some say that the Jew survived because of his religion. We have no quarrel with them, for there is much truth in what they say. But we would remind them that it would be equally true to say that the Jewish religion survived because of the Jew. Had the Jews been made of weaker stuff, had they been incapable of converting the vision of a few inspired seers into the life-motif of a whole people, had they not been endowed by nature with the peculiar genius to translate their faith into expressive and evolving laws and institutions, to keep it forever fresh and vigorous by pouring new concepts into old forms, and to adapt it ever anew to profounder insights and higher intuitions, had they been unwilling or unable to suffer long for an ideal, and had they failed to match the heroic quality of their faith by a corresponding quality in their own nature, both they and their religion would have perished. It was Judah Halevi who declared: "If there had been no Jews, there would have been no Torah."<sup>4</sup>

It is of less moment now to determine who sustained whom, and how the intertwined strands of

<sup>4</sup> *Cuzari* II, 56.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

cause and effect can be separated, than to grasp fully the amazing fact that a long, unbroken covenanted relationship did exist between the people of Israel and the faith of Israel, that Israel from of old, athirst for life and immortality, evolved a faith which exalted life and emancipated it, and that this faith, in turn, through the long centuries, nurtured the life of Israel and fed its powers of survival. In a word, it is important to understand the miracle of "The Ark carrying those who carry it."

But this is certain—we have survived! Not in protective isolation, nor yet on a plane of primitive life or a low cultural *niveau*, where long and changeless survival is not uncommon, but in the very thick of life, near the nerve centers of civilization, in all the fields of conflict, and, frequently, persecuted and oppressed.

This fact of our history we cannot write off as a mere accident. To us and to our ancestors, all history is revelation and testimony. We hold history in great reverence. We were the first people to write history, and to interpret it. "The Book of Chronicles was given for the sole purpose of interpretation." Our people were encouraged to rehearse and to cogitate upon the great moments of their national history. "The more one expatiates upon the story of the Exodus the more praise is due him"; for in it is guidance and prophecy for the future. "The last Redeemer will be like unto

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

the first.”<sup>5</sup> Our spiritual leaders based their faith in God not upon any cosmological proofs, but upon history—upon those significant events in their own and in the world’s history and those processes of the unfolding spiritual life of man which revealed the presence of God. History to them was evidence for faith far more valid than philosophical proofs!

The Jewish people today is therefore warranted in drawing deep draughts of confidence from its past history. What we were able to do over and over again in the past, under all conceivable circumstances and in all parts of the world, we may yet do again, and again in the future. Nothing has fundamentally changed for us, neither the world’s mania for persecution, nor our own unbroken will to live. Our forces are not less today, but more. Our powers of adaptability, which the strong life-sense of our people developed, have not been dulled. We were able in the past to adapt ourselves to all forms of economic life and activity—the pastoral, agricultural, commercial and industrial—and to all forms of political systems and arrangements. We adjusted ourselves to conditions of utter rightlessness, to restricted rights, and to equality of rights. If in the future, Jews will be faced with the necessity of adjusting themselves to new economic and political arrangements, to new forms of capitalism or socialism, or to new

<sup>5</sup> *Mid. R. Num.* II.3.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

conditions of restrictions and disabilities, or if they will be again confronted, as many of them already are, with the necessity of emigrating to new countries and of establishing a new Diaspora, they will be able to make their adjustments in the same way as their people have done throughout the ages.

The annihilationist policy of the Nazis is not likely to become the norm which will fix the actual relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the days to come. Such policies never assume world-wide dimensions. The Jewish dispersion is too far-flung for one policy to embrace it all. Undoubtedly many a Jewish community will receive hard hammering in the future. Many of them will be liquidated and their members will be scattered to the four winds. A new era of Jewish wandering and migration has already set in. Everywhere Jewish life will for a long time to come find itself under the discomfort of hostile propaganda and the threat of an overhanging menace. But unless the entire world plunges back into barbarism, and the pathological obsessions of the Teutonic dervishes seize hold of the whole of mankind—a condition conceivable but hardly probable—the exterminationist policies of the Nazis are destined to be localized. Perhaps even in the Reich itself time will neutralize them. In other lands where governments are resolved to circumscribe the participation of Jews in the political, economic and cultural life of the nation, some

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

legal *modus vivendi* will have to be evolved by them. The legal status of the Jew will have to be defined. In such countries, the Jews will have to learn again how to live worthy and undefeated lives, even under the duress of formidable disabilities. They will have to seek refuge again and they will find it in their own culture and faith, in the unassailable wisdom of their heritage, in their own communal organizations, and in the pride of "fulfilling the Torah in suffering." And they will wait and work for a better day, when they shall be permitted to walk again with unchained feet the free highways of the world.

Should the Nazi-Fascist movement spend itself and should nations return to the primal sanities of civilized life, constitutional guarantees for individuals and minorities will be re-established in the world and anti-Semitism will cease to be a matter of political policy and program. The pressures upon the Jewish group will then be greatly relaxed.

A substantial section of Israel now lives under a Communist regime. Whether Jewish life can retain its identity under Communism and whether Judaism or, for that matter, any of the historic religions, can long survive under such a regime, remains to be seen. The Soviet Union has not only not been hostile to the perpetuation of race and nationality groups within its borders, but it has actually fostered their autonomy and self-determi-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

nation. As an ethnic group, the Jews of the Soviet Union have been given equal opportunities to develop their own soviets in localities where they are the majority of the populations, to build their own schools, and to employ their own language in judicial and administrative transactions. The Yiddish press and literature have been steadily expanding. "The departments of Jewish studies in the universities and academies of Moscow, Kiev, Minsk, Odessa, etc., have employed a larger personnel and offered greater facilities for Jewish research than perhaps all European and American universities combined."<sup>6</sup>

Whether the Jewish people of the Soviet Union will, in spite of these favorable opportunities for self-determination, choose the road of assimilation, only time can tell. Whether their Yiddish proletarian culture, which is denuded of all the religio-Hebraic elements of the classic Jewish culture, will become so completely different as to set it off as a totally different culture, and whether the Jews of the Soviet Union will be able to re-establish vital bonds of spiritual and cultural unity with the rest of world Jewry, remains to be seen. Certainly there are at present no indications of any imminent dissolution of the Jewish group in Russia.

Russian communism has been antireligious. Judaism, along with all other religions, has been

<sup>6</sup> Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York, 1937), II, p. 314.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

severely repressed. But irreligion is not an essential of Communism. Historically, it was the religious motif which nurtured, and religious bodies which fostered Communism. Modern Socialism received its comprehensive and scientific exposition at the hands of Marx and his disciples at a time when materialistic determinism, now largely discredited, was the philosophic vogue. The theoreticians of the movement, in an effort to make their socialistic hypotheses up to date, drafted it upon those extreme materialistic hypotheses with which, of course, they have no essential connection. The fact that organized religion evinced little sympathy for the struggling masses was also a contributing factor to the antireligious attitude of the founders of modern Socialism. But it is becoming clear to many that in turning antireligious, Socialism has needlessly sacrificed a most powerful ally and has drawn to itself antagonisms which would otherwise not be directed against its real purposes.

It is quite possible that in time the Soviet Union may come to modify its attitude towards religion in the same way as it has already modified its attitude towards nationalism and patriotism and towards certain economic dogmas. In that case, Judaism in Russia, along with other historical religions, which a generation of repressions has not succeeded in stamping out, may yet enjoy a new lease on life. Certainly there is no warrant for assuming that all future experiments

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL.

in collectivism and socialization in other parts of the world will, of necessity, be antireligious in character.

Surveying the world scene, one is accordingly led to the conclusion that while there are manifold threats today to Jewish security, to Jewish rights and to Jewish peace, there is no imminent threat to Jewish survival—at least none different from those which Jews were able to circumvent in the past.

The Jewish people will remain intact. Even to those who would escape their Jewish destiny, opportunity has now been denied. *Nolens volens* the Jew must now remain and be counted as a Jew. Unto the third and fourth generation an inescapable, even if unwelcome, racial identification is forced upon him. The modern anti-Semite does not want the Jew to assimilate, to intermarry, to be converted, or give up his distinctive way of life. On the contrary, he wants him to remain the Jew *integral*, isolated, quarantined, exiled or annihilated, but always the Jew. This is quite different from our experiences in the past. There was always an easy and profitable way out from the harsh disabilities of Jewish existence. In the twelfth century, Judah Halevi could remind the Gentile world that Jewish survival is voluntary: "For, whoever wishes to do so can become the friend and equal of his oppressor by uttering one word, and without any difficulty."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cuzari I,115.

IV

What should, therefore, concern us today is not whether the Jewish people will survive, but how. Shall it be affirmatively and challengingly, as in the great periods of our past, holding our banners high in a day of battle and storm; or negatively, creeping into the nooks and crannies of the earth, waiting for the wrath to pass and grateful for the mere gift of existence and survival? We can do either. Apart from all else, apart from the mighty energies which the past has stored up in us, mere inertia and social lag can keep us going for an indefinite period. Many Jews, especially the more prosperous ones, out of fear and personal interest, are choosing the latter course. But the Jewish people as a whole, I believe, will not, because it cannot, consent to such a role of passivity, abdication and escapism.

There is too much leaven in its spirit, too powerful a dynamic in its faith and too much of the unquenchably prophetic in its traditions. When dangers threaten, when the enemy appears on the horizon, then the Ark of the Covenant begins to move—the Ark which “carries those who carry it,” the Ark which rests with the people, and marches with the people—and the cry goes up: “Arise, O Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered!” and a militancy, a bitter stubbornness, a

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

sharp defiance comes into the hearts of our people, and they are ready for battle. . .

The Jewish people, through its thoughtful guides and leaders, has been quick to appraise the issues which are involved in the present-day world crisis and to grasp the true significance of the murderous attack which is being made upon it. It has come to understand that the present conflict which is tearing the world apart is but another phase of the eternal conflict between Jacob and Esau, Israel and Edom, Rome and Jerusalem, Judaism and Paganism. The neo-pagans of the twentieth century wish to destroy the Jew because they hate and fear the spirit of the Jew, which has been the implacable and indefeasible foe of paganism throughout the ages and which will not rest until it has destroyed the new paganism also. They are not afraid of the Jews' physical power. The Jews were never numbered among the conquering peoples of the earth. They never built empires. Their legions never swept over continents with fire and sword. No Cyrus sprang from their loins, no Alexander, no Hannibal, no Ghengis Khan and no Napoleon to shake the world. Against such conquerors one can protect oneself; one can build Siegfried lines of defense and fashion weapons in Krupp and Skoda works. But the Jews are foes of another stamp, and the fear which they inspire is a greater fear, and at bottom a justifiable fear.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

The neo-pagans sense a real menace, a threat to them and to their world.

John Macmurray, writing in his book, *The Clue to History*, sums it up admirably: "It (Fascism) discovers that the source of all this pressure towards progress, equality, freedom and common humanity is the Jew. The persecution of the Jews in Germany has, of course, the same source as their persecution throughout the history of Christian Europe; but it has a significant difference. It is secular, political, conscious and organized in a way that it has never been, and it is felt to be the central problem of society in which all other problems have their roots. This new anti-Semitism of Germany looks completely irrational to us. From a purely intellectual point of view the problem seems, to say the least of it, absurdly exaggerated, and the practical reasons advanced to prove that the Jews are a real menace to Germany, the source of all her misfortunes and defeats, and the organizers and creators of all internationalism, and of Bolshevism in particular, are clearly nothing but *rationalizations* of an emotional impulse. Yet we have to face the fact that the Leader of the German people has no doubt in his own mind that the Jewish problem is the centre of all problems, not merely in Germany, but in the world. It is useless to dismiss this as an illusion, because if it is, it demands explanation.

"But it is no illusion. It is the truth. Hitler's

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

declaration that the Jewish consciousness is poison to the Aryan races is the deepest insight that the Western world has yet achieved into its own nature; and his capacity to realize this is the proof of his genius as well as the secret of his power and of the curious fascination which his personality exerts. One has only to attend to the form of the statement to see that it is not the practical power or wealth of the Jews that he fears, but the character of the Jewish *mind*. It is the Jewish consciousness which is the enemy, not an organized Jewish army, not even an insurrection of the Jews in Germany. It is the hidden penetration of the Jewish spirit into the Gentile mind that is the danger; and it is a danger because the 'Aryan' mind cannot resist it, but must succumb. The task is to extirpate the influence of the Jewish consciousness upon the world. At all costs the leaven must be got out of the lump, or very soon the whole will be leavened, and the result will be the final end of the 'Aryan' (sc. pagan) tradition. Europe will be so false to itself that it will create a universal communism, [Note: Communism, not necessarily, but Justice!] which will destroy blood and race as the basis of civilization, destroy the beauties and the heroisms of the struggle for power, deny the natural superiority of the white races, and of Germans in particular, and produce universal equality and brotherhood. The Jewish spirit is not merely under the illusion of these

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

ideas; it is the force, in the world, which creates them in ideas and compels the rest of humanity to achieve them in practice. I need ask for no greater testimony to the truth of the whole thesis of this book than Hitler's. His inspiration corroborates my own pedestrian reflection. The only difference between us is that his will and mine respond to the truth in different ways. The thought of the triumph of the Jewish consciousness fills me with joyous exhilaration, while it casts Hitler into the depths of despair. For Hitler the Jewish consciousness is a poison. I have learned from the greatest genius of the Jewish race to recognize it as the Water of Life.”<sup>8</sup>

The Catholic savant, Jacques Maritain, approaching the Jewish question from a different angle, nevertheless arrives at the same conclusion. He quotes Léon Bloy: “The history of the Jews hinders the history of the human race as a dike hinders the flood, to raise its level,” and he declares: “Israel, which is not of the world, is to be found at the very heart of the world’s structure, stimulating it, exasperating it, moving it. Like an alien body, like an activating ferment injected into the mass, it gives the world no peace, it bars slumber, it teaches the world to be discontented and restless as long as the world has not God, it stimulates the movement of history. . . . The diverse

<sup>8</sup> John Macmurray, *The Clue to History* (New York, 1939), pp. 25-27. See also David Frishman, “Al Ha-Yahadut,” in his *Collected Works* (Warsaw, 1939), VIII, pp. 16-17.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

specific causes which the observer may assign to anti-Semitism, all the way from the feeling of hate for the foreigner, natural to any social group, down to religious hatreds—alas! that these two words may be coupled—and to the manifold inconveniences produced by some waves of immigration, mask an underlying spring of hatred deeper down. If the world hates the Jews, it is because the world clearly senses that they will always be outsiders in a supernatural sense, it is because the world detests their passion for the absolute and the unbearable stimulus which it inflicts. It is the vocation of Israel which the world execrates. To be hated by the world is their glory, as it is also the glory of Christians who live by faith.”<sup>9</sup>

Is not this what the classic philosopher of Jewish history, Judah Halevi, had in mind when he declared: “Israel amidst the nations is like the heart amidst the organs of the body; it is at one and the same time the most sick and the most healthy of them.”<sup>10</sup>

There is a form of magic called homeopathic. By it, if you are superstitious, you try to destroy your enemy by destroying an image of him. In the eyes of the Nazi and Fascist revolutionists of moral nihilism, the Jew is the image or symbol of all those spiritual concepts of life which they must destroy if they are to succeed. And so they

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Maritain, *A Christian Looks at the Jewish Question* (New York, 1939), pp. 29-30.

<sup>10</sup> Cuzari II, 36.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

are practicing the black art of homeopathic magic upon him. They are hoping to destroy them by destroying him.

The Jewish problem is thus the world problem epitomized. The present world conflict again finds the Jew and his spiritual traditions the battle-ground of contending armies of mankind. The Rabbis of old apprehended this recurrent role which Israel plays in the drama of civilization and they welcomed it. "Blessed are the children of Israel in all their dwelling places, even though they wander painfully to the four corners of the earth, from North to South and from South to North, from East to West, and from West to East, they are always in the center!"<sup>11</sup> Always in the center! That is our horoscope! In that house of destiny was our life cast!

The Jews of this generation should welcome this role, hard though it be, even as their fathers before them. God has again sent them a great, testing hour! They must again find the strength not only for survival, but for a stiff-necked resistance to the power which is again trampling under foot all that is noble and kindly and decent in life. They must arouse and join forces for a major offensive with all men of all faiths and of all races who have remained faithful to the spiritual vision of life. It is not enough to defend the *status quo* against reaction. Reaction must be defeated by de-

<sup>11</sup> *Tana d'be Eliyahu*, Chap. 5.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

stroying those evils in our present system which made it possible. A courageous attack all along the line, summoning all our courage and employing all of our resources, upon poverty, upon the economic insecurity of the masses, upon corruption and special privilege, upon the excessive concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, upon monopoly and exploitation, upon the war machine and the merchants of death, upon chauvinism, national exhibitionism and patrioteering, upon race arrogance and race domination—in a word, upon all that our religion and all the great religions of mankind have branded and outlawed. Reaction is attacking the Jew today. Let the Jew defend himself by an audacious counterattack. Let the Ark of the Covenant begin to move again! There are no weapons which reaction can forge strong enough to destroy us. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." And there are no fortresses strong enough to protect reaction against the mighty thunderbolts of the human spirit once they are unleashed. The Jews have been singled out for destruction. This then is their holy and destined hour when "the exaltations of their God should be in their throats and the double-edged sword in their hands."

Just as democracy and liberalism will perish unless they resume their offensive, so the Jewish people will be defeated and beaten into servitude unless they fling themselves resolutely into the

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

fight with Amalek and unless the hands of their leaders remain firm and uplifted all through the long day of battle until the sun sets upon their victory.

In a sense the present state of spiritual conflict and struggle in the world is a more normal and congenial one for the spirit of our people. The life of our spirit was always a life of swords. Judaism was fused in struggle from Canaanitish days onward. Prophecy was born in protest and militancy. The prophet was a man of strife and contention to all the earth. The spirit of the Jew was never relaxed, even in Palestine. It was always braced against alien influences and the "customs of the heathen." Our position as a people was always abnormal, even in the ancient world. For the ancient world was all idolatrous and Israel was not. Our position was abnormal in the medieval world. It is abnormal in the modern world. It is meant to be. Judaism always conceived of life as progress and progress as the struggle of the spirit—to wrestle with gods and men and to prevail. Even in the world to come, Judaism allowed no repose to the righteous: "The pious sages will have no peace even in the world to come."<sup>12</sup> Our people are thus not likely to be shaken spiritually by the tensions and stresses under which they are living and will continue to live. Rather are they likely to be healed and made whole by becoming more truly

<sup>12</sup> *Moed. Kat.*, 29a.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

and more intimately themselves and more at home with their own racial genius.

Otherwise, no new technique for Jewish survival is necessary. Adequate communal organization, the proper education of our youth in our religion, language, history and literature, the encouragement of Jewish scholarship and the devotion to and active participation in the upbuilding of the Jewish homeland in Palestine—these are the ways which have proved adequate in the past and which are likely to prove adequate in the future also.

To the everlasting credit of this sorely-tried generation of Jews be it said, that in spite of the tragedies which were piled up upon it, Ossa on Pelion, in spite of the frightful disruption of numerous old centers of Jewish life, in spite of the impoverishment, exhaustion and persecutions which made of the whole household of Israel one vast hostelry of pain, it nevertheless was able to find within itself the energy, the courage and the resources to build in Palestine in twenty short years a new and resplendent center of Jewish life, already the fifth largest in the world, and first and foremost in the richness and vitality of its intrinsic Jewish spirit and culture.

The ten thousand evidences given daily in Palestine of renewal, of broken bodies made whole again, of building upon ruins, of courage, vision and self-sacrifice are an imperishable epic of splen-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

dor, the like of which our own people or any other people has not written at any time in its history. If one wishes to see the miracle and the mystery which is Israel, let him go to Palestine in these very disastrous and war-ridden days—days of wrath and Golgotha for our people in the Diaspora—and watch with anointed eyes the undefeated strength, the overarching confidence, the superb zeal and energy, the social vision and the personal idealism which are being poured into the work of rebuilding Jewish national life in its national home. What is being done there and how it is being done, what common folk, transfigured by an ideal, can achieve is a tribute not only to our people and to their sires who begot them but to humanity itself.

Here a people, resolved to live and not to die, is shouting defiance to a world bent upon its destruction. Here it is seeking to build upon strong foundations a lasting home to replace the tabernacles which have proved so frail and impermanent in so many parts of the earth. Here hope is restored to men robbed of hope, and pride to the humbled, and the gift of mission and destiny to those cut off, spiritually dispossessed, and cast out of all inheritance.

Here in Palestine a new and powerful bulwark for the survival of the Jew and of Judaism has been established, as great and as rich in promise, and to be sure, under as great difficulties, as in the

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Regardless of any future developments, something great and heartening and reassuring has already been achieved there.

Palestine is today in the active war zone. One cannot foresee the fate which awaits it. It may be invaded and much of what has been so painfully built up in recent years may again be laid in ruins and ashes. Should the Axis powers win and should they carry out their threats, Jewish Palestine will be dismantled. Then the work of rebuilding it after a Third Destruction will have to be resumed by another generation of Jews. And resumed it will be! It is questionable, however, whether even an Axis victory will lead to the total disruption of the Yishuv. Both economic and imperial considerations may dictate a far less disruptive policy. Should the Allied powers win, it is probable that greater opportunities will be forthcoming for increasing and strengthening the Jewish Homeland. Under such circumstances, although Palestine will, of course, not contain at any time in the calculable future the majority of the Jewish people, it will loom ever larger as the fatherland of our people and as a mighty cultural and spiritual reservoir for world Jewry.

And so the Jewish people faces the critical days ahead not without fears and misgivings, not without dark moments of agony and despair—for great is the wrath and the terror and the menace—

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

but fundamentally unshaken. Jews are carrying on, many of them magnificently. Witness the remarkable outpouring of loyalty, compassion and help on the part of Jews throughout the world for those of their fellow-Jews who find themselves in the iron crucible of affliction. All this is evidence of an inner soundness, of an unbroken solidarity. Thoughtful Jews know their history. They know their resources. They have taken the measure of their enemies. They understand the world significance of their great tribulation. Other nations of antiquity, when they were defeated acknowledged that their gods had been defeated. The Jews always saw in their defeat the *triumph* of their God. . . . In all this there is balm and healing. They know too that hope is a cardinal dogma of their ancient faith which they must not abandon. The first question which a man is asked on Judgment Day is, according to our Sages, "Did you hope for salvation?"

### Hope—and Will!

Solomon ibn Verga tells this story in his *Shebet Yehudah*. A shipload of Jewish refugees from Spain was swept by the plague, and the captain of the ship cast them all ashore upon a barren and uninhabited coast. Most of the unfortunate refugees perished from hunger. Some of them pressed on desperately to find some human habitation. Among them was a man, his wife and his two children. They struggled on through the barren waste,

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

until the mother fainted and died. The man then carried his children in his arms and upon his shoulders until he, too, fell down and fainted from hunger and exhaustion. When he came to, he discovered that his two children had died. He then arose and said: "Master of the Universe, much hast Thou done to make me forsake my faith. Know, however, that in spite of all, I am a Jew and I shall remain a Jew, and nothing that Thou hast brought upon me or art likely to bring upon me will make any difference." He then covered the bodies of his dead children with earth and scrub and walked on into the wilderness to find a human abode.<sup>18</sup>

Here is spiritual resoluteness which matches divine omnipotence! Here is will power which says to the mountains: Be ye removed! Here, in the bitter cry of challenge wrung from the heart of this tortured Spanish refugee, is another key to the mystery of Jewish survival.

<sup>18</sup> Ibn Verga, *Shebet Yehudah* (Hanover, 1855), p. 90.

## The Rediscovery of Judaism

### I

MANY factors have tended to make religion of secondary importance in the life of our people.

Religion, generally, has been pushed into a subordinate position in the Western World. Science has steadily divested it of many of its franchises. The satisfaction which men experienced in the increase of power, wealth and material well-being, yielded by science, placed the latter upon the pedestal which was formerly occupied by religion, whose gifts were now less prized and sought after. Science successfully refuted many theoglico-cosmological pronouncements which were made by religion in its sacred texts. This cast suspicion upon much else in religion. The separation of church and state, the growth in civil authority and the contraction of ecclesiastical authority, the secularization of education and, in the realm of speculative thought, the divorce of philosophy from theology—all these were both cause and effect of the diminishing importance of religion in modern society.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

Other forms of loyalty clamored for supremacy—nation, country, race, class. Each of these derived its sanctions and mandates from sources other than religion, and proceeded to construct systems of thought with little or no reference to it.

The Jewish people left the ghettos of the Western World at a time when these secular movements were unfolding. The world from which the Jews emerged was thoroughly pervaded by religion. It had been thus pervaded for centuries. Every phase and activity of life was bound by its discipline. Nevertheless, the Jews yielded to the new temper of the age as readily as any other people. In some countries they not only caught up with the new secular mood of the Western World but outdistanced it in dogmatic ardor and intensity.

There transpired among the Jewries of Western and Eastern Europe not only reform movements designed to revamp their religious ideas and practices, to "modernize" them and to bring them into consonance with the new outlook of Europe, but also strong centrifugal movements away from Judaism altogether—movements of flight, not towards other faiths so much—for these latter flights were dictated, as a rule, by careerism and social escalade,—but towards religious negativism and indifference, expressed in nonaffiliation with the synagogue and in a renunciation of the entire religious regimen of Judaism.

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

This flight from Judaism was also motivated by strong political and economic considerations. Throughout the nineteenth century, Jews struggled for emancipation. They reached out after complete equality. They believed that their distinctive religion and its beliefs and traditional way of life segregated them and disadvantaged them among men. They further believed that by surrendering them they would succeed in acquiring those rights and privileges which other people possessed. This political and economic motif behind the flight complex was soon rationalized into a system of thought, conveniently neutral and agnostic, which discounted religion generally and proclaimed that the scientific progress of mankind had finally outstripped religion, and that although religion might still have a certain usefulness for the young, the poor and the unenlightened, cultured and prosperous folks could get along very well without it. All religious and racial differences were certain to be merged very soon in a common brotherhood of men, dedicated to the life of pure reason. The mighty accents of the American and French Revolutions and the other upsurging political struggles of the century reverberated through all this hopeful and wishful thinking. Thus Enlightenment and Emancipation were the Pied Piper whose music beguiled many Jews away from their ancient loyalties and spiritual securities.

The wealthy and the well-placed Jews espe-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

cially pampered themselves with these comforting notions. The richer they became and the more important positions they occupied, the less need they had for religion. The upper classes which succeeded in reaching, if not the center, then at least the periphery of the non-Jewish world, were most supercilious in their attitude towards Judaism. When men are prosperous they find it easy to dispense with God — especially with a Jewish God. . . .

Fortunately not all Jews were of the same mind. Many refused to exchange spiritual treasures for material advantage. They saw neither the need nor the wisdom of it. They were of the opinion that if freedom and equality were to come to all men, they should come also to the Jews as a matter of right, as a restoration of that which belonged to them and to all men as a natural endowment, and not in payment for unwarranted sacrifices of religious convictions, a distinctive culture and an historic way of life. They furthermore suspected that the new millennium might turn out to be quite as much of a mirage as many others in the long past of Israel and, on the basis of past experiences, they feared that should another such reaction in their political and economic fortunes set in, Jews would find themselves spiritually shattered, homeless and utterly bereft, unless they had the secured sanctuaries of Jewish life and faith into which to retreat for refuge and solace. Many

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

other Jews, out of force of habit or because of the strong appeal of ancient ties and memories, remained constant. So that Judaism was not lost.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, wide and ominous cracks appeared in the beautiful facade of European Enlightenment and Emancipation. Startling eruptions of violent anti-Semitism occurred, at one time or another, in nearly every country in Western Europe. Medievalism raised its ugly head over and over again, either as a Magyar blood libel or a Germanic literary pogrom or a Gaelic "cause célèbre" or an outright Slavic slaughter of Jews. The rains sadly disfigured the wall "daubed with whitened plaster," and the foundations thereof were uncovered.

Some Jews were quick to read these warning signs. They returned to their faith and their people as if to a shelter from a gathering storm. Others, however, persisted in their hypnosis, discounted these evidences of an underlying menace and blithely proceeded on their way. In the generation before the World War, Judaism in Western Europe touched bottom, and it languished also among vast sections of Jewry in the United States.

Then came the World War which unleashed all the furies. Who can number the high hopes of mankind which perished upon its battlefields? What was apparently won, was actually sunk and lost in their bloody bogs—freedom, democracy, the self-determination of peoples, the rights of

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

minorities and the vision of an international order based upon law, justice and peace. Out of ten million graves of the needlessly slain, there arose the dread ghosts of hatred, of national and racial passions, of arrogance and vindictiveness, of widespread want and bitter class struggle, and a dread stampede towards force, violence and terror as life's sole technique. These ghosts are dancing today their "danse macabre" in the hearts of men and nations. Civilization is plunging into darkness and chaos. A paganism far more crass and cruel than that of antiquity is engulfing the whole Western World. We are witnessing the tragic dissolution of the whole European synthesis.

For the Jewish people, the World War and its aftermath spelled Golgotha! A quarter of a century of mounting disasters and calamities culminated in the unprecedented horrors of recent years. Great Jewish communities, rich in history, culture and achievement, among whom the dream of a free, enlightened and tolerant humanity was most ardently cherished, have been plunged into Hell. Gone for them are Enlightenment and Emancipation. Gone are the dreams of the great and gracious days, the dreams of human brotherhood and equality. Gone for their sons and daughters are the beckoning horizons of great careers and great service. Gone are the shelter and security. Gone, even, the scant and tenuous security of the ghetto! Into exile, broken, stripped and impover-

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

ished, they must go, even as their forefathers before them, who knew neither Enlightenment nor Emancipation. From country and homes where they had known dignity, honor, power and wealth, Jews in their mounting legions, must now wander forth, bewildered and disillusioned into a bewildered and disillusioned world.

For the world, generally, stands today bewildered and disillusioned. The strong and sure foundations upon which it had builded its life have been rudely shaken. That high optimism which fed upon truly remarkable achievements in every scientific field has vanished. Marvelous had been the vistas which opened up before the eyes of men in the preceding century. Men could dream then and men did dream, unabashed, of a glorious and uninterrupted progress for mankind, of an unending conquest of nature, and of building, in a world of abundance, a civilization free from all poverty, ignorance and war. "In the nineteenth century," wrote Victor Hugo, "war will be dead, the scaffold will be dead, hatred will be dead, frontiers will be dead, royalty will be dead, dogmas will be dead, man will begin to *live!*" But here we are in the twentieth century, and war is not dead, the scaffold is not dead, hatred is not dead, frontiers are not dead, royalty is not dead, dogmas are not dead, and man is beginning to die. . . . The vista which stretches before our generation today ends at the edge of a wilderness.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

For twenty-five years now, men have lived in a world of mounting hate, intolerance, and bigotry, of revolutions, invasions, wars, the rise and fall of empires, and amidst the slaughter of millions of their kind. Great peoples have destroyed their liberties and enslaved themselves. Millions of men cower today in terrorized submissiveness. The wealth of nations is being drained by war and by preparation for wars which will also drain the lives of their people. The mind of man, trained and sharpened by generations of scientific education, is now applied to the perfection of the war technique. So that the discoveries which science records in our day in such great numbers no longer fill the hearts of men with pride or enthusiasm. They suspect that these things will not contribute either to their happiness or security. The human spirit stands today frightened, weighted down with apocalyptic foreboding, as if awaiting the crash of doom.

## II

The thoughtful among men have accordingly begun to search earnestly for the via salutis, the road away from disaster. They are seeking desperately hard to rediscover that vision which was somehow lost amidst the brilliant pageantry of scientific achievement in the last century, to the

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

hurt and sorrow of the world. They understand now what the wise men of the earth have always known: that increased knowledge does not necessarily mean increased goodness or happiness, that facts are not in themselves blessings, that "truth can make us mad as well as free," that the prolongation of human life is not the same as the improvement of human life, that the acceleration of a process does not always insure a finer product, that change does not necessarily spell progress, and that democracy, as Lecky pointed out a half century ago, may often destroy liberty.<sup>1</sup> They realize now that the fault is not with science or education or democracy, as such, but with the interpretation which men have put upon them, with the omnipotence and autonomy which they have ascribed to them and with their failure to understand that science, education and democracy are means and not ends in themselves.

What has been tragically missing in our civilization is the compelling and unifying faith in the great human goals which religion, and religion alone, has set for mankind, and towards the attainment of which science, education and democracy should contribute, if they are to fulfill their chief function. Mankind lost sight of these goals. Therefore human progress today has no clear direction. Good material and good tools are not enough for the builder. He must have a plan.

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty*, I, pp. 256 ff.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

Every true sanctuary of man, the Temple, the Ka'ba or the earthly Jersualem must be modelled after a celestial archetype. To build a noble and enduring society, it is not enough to have wealth and knowledge. Mankind must be possessed of the architectural plan, and that, only the spiritual vision of man has designed. It must also have the will and loyalty to follow that plan. That the moral sense of man alone provides. Without faith in God, the reality of the spiritual vision as well as the moral sense in man are quickly denied and rejected in the world.

Thoughtful men have also rediscovered the truth that faith in God is the strongest bulwark of a free society. Human freedom began when men became conscious that over and above society and nature there is a God who created them, who breathed His spirit into them, who fashioned them in His likeness, and that they are, therefore, possessed of intrinsic and independent significance and are endowed, as individuals, with original and irrevocable rights and authority. When in the long past men challenged the authority of kings or magistrates or restrictive customs and traditions, they did so in the name of some higher mandate derived from the spirit of God within them, in the name of some moral sanction which emanated from their relationship to God. Men became free when they acknowledged a higher authority than that of state, class, system or ruler. Fundamentally

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

the eternal struggle has always been between autocracy and theocracy in their broadest implications. Modern Nazi "steely, authoritative romanticism" (Goebbels' phrase) is but another expression of the old autocratic principle eternally at war with the principle of spiritual, disciplined freedom in man.

Friends of democracy have somehow forgotten the religious origin of the whole democratic dogma in the modern world. They have forgotten that political freedom came to the Western World as a result of a long struggle for religious freedom and not vice versa. This struggle received its impetus not from organized religion, to be sure, that is to say from the church, but from the faith of deeply religious folk in the dynamics of religion, in revelation, and from a deliberate return to prophetic traditions and sanctions. Every great revolution in Christian thought was a return to the prophetic traditions of Israel. They drew their inspiration from the moral passion of Biblical Judaism, for Judaism fashioned God not in the Caesar-image of an imperial ruler, nor in the Aristotelian-image of an ultimate philosophical principle, nor as the cult-image of a priestly hierarchy, but as "the personification of moral energy."<sup>2</sup> Every important social and economic movement in Western Europe in the last few centuries was inspired by this Judaeo-Christian ethical idealism.

<sup>2</sup> See Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York, 1929), p. 520.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

"On the whole, therefore, it is very probable that the energetic, even revolutionary, efforts of this century to transform the form of society in favor of the down-trodden masses are very intimately connected with the New Testament ideas [which, because of their origin and content, are also, of course, Old Testament ideas], although the champions of these efforts feel themselves bound in other respects to oppose what is now-a-days called Christianity."<sup>8</sup>

Modern democracy was born in the struggle for religious freedom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Protestant Reformation was not merely a reformation in the realm of doctrine and ritual and a repudiation of the authority of Papacy and the hierarchical system of the Church. It was much more than that. The early leaders of the Protestant Movement did not themselves fully appreciate the forces which they represented. They were confused, and at times very inconsistent. They did not grasp fully what was happening in the mind and heart of the world. What actually was happening was a new determined upreaching on the part of men in the Western World for spiritual liberty, for the emancipation of man from the strait jacket of Tradition and System. Luther, when still a revolutionary, proclaimed that "human authority might be resisted when

<sup>8</sup> Lange, *History of Materialism* (New York, 1925), II, Sec. 4, p. 271.

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

its mandates conflicted with the ‘Word of God.’” Suddenly on all sides one heard again the magic phrase, the “‘Word of God.’” A new authority surged back into the life of the world—the authority of direct revelation which was available to all.

The demand for spiritual liberty soon expressed itself in demands for other forms of liberty. Peasant revolts followed. Political and economic rights were demanded by humble people. By what authority? They had no authority. They had no human law to which they could appeal. In whose name did they speak? In the same name and by the same authority as the ancient prophets of Israel presumed to challenge the kings, the noblemen and the powerfully rich of their day. They spoke in the name of God, in the name of a revelation from God! All men were equal because God made all men equal. The things which they demanded were the things which the Bible, the revealed Word of God, conceded to them, and to all men. The social revolutions of the sixteenth century which were quenched in the blood of a hundred thousand peasants received their inspiration from religion and revelation.

“The social revolution was conceived under a theologic guise as the ‘Millennial Kingdom,’ the ‘Restitution of All Things,’ the ‘Reign of the Saints,’ and in cognate phrases. . . . It was under the dominance of this attitude of mind that the conviction of the imminence of the promised mil-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

lennial reign seized such vast numbers of the poor working-population of Western Europe during those early years of the fourth decade of the 16th century. In such wise did the disinherited classes of that age envisage their social revindication.”<sup>4</sup>

“The full thunder-cloud of the Hebrew prophets, stealing over a world in negative stagnation, waked the sleeping lightnings of the soul, and for a while streaked the atmosphere of history with fearful portents. . . . The downtrodden serfs of Franconia had not long heard the glad tidings from Wittenberg, ere they began to draw parallels between themselves and the old Israel when the desert had been passed. . . . The earth was the Lords, and the army of the saints was come to take it. . . . The time of jubilee was come, when every believer should have his field of heritage. . . . Throughout the great movement which in the third decade of the sixteenth century spread insurrection from the Breisgau to Saxony, the peasants were animated with the belief that the Gospel, armed with the sword of Joshua, was to subjugate the world, and that all the conditions of property, of law, of civil administration, under which secular communities exist, were to be superseded by institutions conformed to a divine model.”<sup>5</sup>

The quintessence of the spiritual idealism of the

<sup>4</sup> E. B. Bay, *Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists* (London, 1903), pp. 388-9.

<sup>5</sup> James Martineau, *Studies of Christianity* (London, 1890), pp. 341-3.

Protestant Reformation, which later on affected the life of the American people, lay with the various Anabaptist sects which sprang up in the wake of the Reformation. Some of these sects were hundreds of years ahead of their time. They believed in the absolute moral responsibility of the individual, in his inherent spiritual sovereignty, and in the right of private judgment in matters of religion. They held that the duty of the state was only to protect the good and to punish the evil, and beyond that the state itself was evil. The state had no right to circumscribe the freedom of the individual. These sects were the first to demand absolute disestablishment—the separation of church and state. They were the first to preach universal toleration and freedom of worship. They maintained that all property belonged to God. Some of them like the early Christians practised voluntary communism, which is a very different thing from the secular, involuntary communism of our day—in fact, its violent negation in everything but surface similarity.

Thus, out of victories won for religious freedom on the battlefields of the spirit, there stemmed other victories for man's political, economic and social freedom. The absolutism of king and state was first curbed by the religious spirit of man demanding at the point of revolution the right, not of universal suffrage or of better living conditions, but the right to worship God as it saw fit.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

These doctrines of the Anabaptists were carried over to Holland and England, and then to the American Colonies. The Founding Fathers of our country adopted many of the doctrines of these religious "fanatics." When they wrote into the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," they were giving political expression to seminal religious Anabaptist doctrines. When they countered the claim of the Divine Right of Kings with the claim of the Divine Right of People to resist the tyranny of kings, when they proclaimed that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God, when they engraved upon the Liberty Bell the Biblical proclamation: "And Thou shalt proclaim freedom throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof," or when they placed on the first seal of the newborn republic of the United States the figure of Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, they were marshalling religious truth, religious authority and religious tradition to underwrite and sanction their political revolution.

Struggles for human freedom, uninspired by a living faith in God, often lead mankind to disaster. In recent years, Russia attempted to build a free and happy society without God. It succeeded only in forging a dictatorship and an enslaved society.

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

Fascist and Nazi states in Europe also sought to build happier, socialized communities on the basis of a Godless materialism. They succeeded only in effecting, with the aid of rubber truncheons and concentration camps, a brutally regimented and terrorized society. The "new" orders which these Godless revolutionary movements achieved were only variant forms of older despotisms. Though they pride themselves on being young and dynamic, they are so only in the sense of being immature, raw, untempered and cruel. A society achieves real renewal only through inner spiritual renewal. If freedom is ever to speak again everywhere, its speech, to quote Heine, will have to be Biblical.

The soldiers of Cromwell marched into battle singing Psalms. For three centuries the spirit of Cromwell and of his Puritan hosts has molded the free life of the English peoples. Roger Williams established the first free society in the New World in the name of a God of Freedom, whose faithful minister he was. The spirit of Roger Williams has permeated the free life of this nation to this very day. The American Revolution kindled its torches at the flame of a religious dogma that men were created by God to be free and equal. The long protracted struggle in this country to emancipate the slaves received its powerful momentum not from economics, or from any materialistic conception of history, but from deep religious convictions,

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

which revolted against the enslavement of human beings who were children of God, and which saw in the Civil War a divine retribution for the sins which the nation committed against the black man, and which heard in the tramp of men marching to battle the footsteps of God—"His truth is marching on!" . . .

Democracy shrivels when its religious source dries up. An early and friendly critic of American democracy, De Tocqueville, had cautioned it: "Despotism may govern without faith, but liberty cannot."

Why do all present-day enemies of human liberties persecute religion, even though in Nazi and Fascist lands they sometimes come to terms with clericalism which is a totally different thing? Because religion in its spiritual essence is their death warrant. They see in Judaism and in its offspring, Christianity, the last unwearied watchmen over the ramparts of human liberties, who must be destroyed before their own freedom-annihilating materialistic revolutions can be firmly established. Thus, fundamentally, it is not the Jews whom the Fascist dictators wish to drive out of Europe, but Judaism, that entire complex of ethical and spiritual ideas rooted in the principle of the sacredness of human personality, the worth of the individual, and the transcendent moral law which are at the very heart of the Judaeo-Christian civilization which they wish to supplant.

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

Dictators hold man in contempt. Hitler called the masses "eine Hammelherde von Hohlköpfen." Otto Strasser, a close collaborator of Hitler in the early days of the Nazi movement, declares that Hitler surrounds himself with depraved and vicious accomplices because they confirm his profound conviction that man is essentially vile. "From this conviction I will never depart . . . Man is congenitally evil. He can only be controlled by force. To govern him, everything is permissible. You must lie, betray, even kill when policy demands it."<sup>6</sup>

Hermann Rauschning, from his intimate knowledge and observation both of the Nazi movement and its Fuehrer, makes this summary: "It may be said in general that at the back of the whole tactics and method of propaganda of National Socialism there is a complete contempt of humanity: the whole system is based on taking men as they are and pandering to their weakness and their bestiality. Such is its universal recipe. National Socialism banks on human sloth and timidity—just as much in the case of the intellectuals, the middle classes, and the old ruling classes, as with the masses. . . . The exploitation of envy and ill-will, of the lowest human instincts, the sowing of dissension between opponents, and the appeal to their ignoble qualities and notorious weaknesses have thus far unfailingly helped Na-

<sup>6</sup> Otto Strasser, *Hitler and I* (Boston, 1940), p. 75.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

tional Socialism to success, incidentally destroying the basis of a general sense of morality which was weak enough to begin with.”<sup>7</sup>

Dictators are anti-Semitic because they know or sense that liberty is Semitic in origin and character. “Democracy,” declared Hitler, “is fundamentally Jewish, not Germanic.” The so-called Aryan must trace his political traditions back to the oriental despotisms and King-worship of ancient Persia and to the caste system of India. Even the Greeks had no strong consistent democratic tradition. Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle opposed the democratic form of government. Aristotle actually defended slavery. “The Greek political thinkers do not recognize, or do not make proper allowance for the rights and responsibilities of the individual soul. Just as they failed to distinguish between Nationality and Government, so they failed also to distinguish between Conscience and Public duty . . . Their work was vitiated by their failure to realize the extent and urgency of the claim of the individual soul. Men must be spiritually free before they can co-operate politically on the highest terms.”<sup>8</sup> But the Semite of the desert, from whom Israel is descended, neither knew nor tolerated any despotism. The democratic motif runs like a golden thread through the whole political, social, economic and religious history of Israel from the

<sup>7</sup> Hermann Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism* (New York, 1939), pp. 46-7.

<sup>8</sup> A. E. Zimmern, *Legacy of Greece* (Oxford, 1922), pp. 330-31.

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

earliest nomadic period unto the present.<sup>9</sup> "Among the Arabs there were no distinctions, traditional or natural, except the unconscious power given a famous sheikh by virtue of his accomplishments; and they taught me that no man could be their leader except he ate the ranks' food, wore their clothes, lived level with them, and yet appeared better in himself."<sup>10</sup>

"For all that goes amiss in our life," declared Philo, "is the work of inequality, and all that keeps its due order is of equality, which in the universe as a whole is most properly called the cosmos, in cities and states is democracy, the most law-abiding and best of constitutions, in bodies is health and in souls virtuous conduct." Democracy was thus of the very pattern of creation.<sup>11</sup> Philo was opposed to ochlocracy, mob rule, and was not hostile to kingship, but within that form of government he called for basic social equality, rejecting all types of tyranny and absolutism.<sup>12</sup>

Thoughtful men are coming to understand that mankind's way back to freedom is the way which leads forward to God.

<sup>9</sup> See my *Democratic Impulse in Jewish History* (New York, 1928), *passim*. See also Professor Lods' *Israel* (New York, 1932), p. 195. On the struggle "between the Arab race which loves liberty and the Persian race accustomed to slavish submission within Islam," see Dozy, as quoted in R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 214 and 256.

<sup>10</sup> T. E. Lawrence, *Revolt in the Desert* (New York, 1927), p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> Philo, *De Spec. Leg.* IV, 237.

<sup>12</sup> See E. R. Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus* (New Haven, 1938), pp. 86 ff.

III

In the same way, and even more earnestly, are thoughtful Jews reaching out today for the religious vision of Jewish life. For ours is a double measure of disillusionment and a double measure of misfortune. More than any other people do we require today the everlasting arms of a great religious conviction to sustain us.

To thoughtful Jews it is becoming increasingly clear that there are no substitutes in Jewish life for religion. Neither philanthropy nor culture nor nationalism is adequate for the stress and challenge of our lives. All these interests can and must find their rightful place within the generous pattern of Judaism. But the pattern must be Judaism, the Judaism of the Torah, the synagogue and the prayer book, the Judaism of the priest, the prophet, the saint, the mystic and the rabbi, the Judaism which speaks of God, and the worship of God, and the commandments of God and the quest of God. Most eloquently did Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, in his *Mesillat Yesharim*, define Judaism in terms to which every classic teacher of Israel, I am sure, would have subscribed:

"We thus see that the chief function of man in this world is to keep the commandments, to worship God, and to withstand trial. The pleasures of this world should be only the means of afford-

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

ing that contentment and serenity which enable man to apply his mind to the fulfillments of the task before him. All of man's strivings should be directed toward the Creator, blessed be He. A man should have no other purpose in whatever he does, be it great or small, than to draw nigh to God and to break down all separating walls, that is, all things of a material nature, between himself and his Master, so that he may be drawn to God as iron to a magnet. He should pursue everything that might prove helpful to such nearness, and avoid everything that is liable to prevent it, as he would avoid fire. In the words of the Psalmist, 'My soul cleaveth to Thee; Thy right hand upholdeth me fast' (Ps. 63:9). Since man came into the world only for the end of achieving nearness to God, he should prevent his soul from being held captive by the things which hinder the realization of that end."<sup>18</sup>

Our leaders would do well to understand this. Our people, and more especially our youth, require, now that Jewish life has entered again upon an age of persecution and martyrdom, more than the example of generosity towards our unfortunate brothers overseas, and a valiant defense of Jewish rights at home. They require the example of the practice of Judaism, as Luzzatto defined it: "to keep the commandments, to worship God and

<sup>18</sup> *Mesillat Yesharim*, trans. M. M. Kaplan (Philadelphia, 1936), pp. 17-18.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

to withstand trial"—the example of religious discipline, piety and sacrificial loyalty. These leaders must help us to rebuild our inner world, now that our outer worlds are beginning to crumble again.

There have been many false prophets of "Er-satz" Judaism in our midst who have frequently misled our people. There were those professional social-workers for example, who announced that a full complement of scientifically administered hospitals and orphanages and other social agencies was a sufficient "vade mecum" for the Jewish people, and that the synagogue and the religious school were quite unnecessary. At best they were to be tolerated only as a concession to those who still take such things seriously, and in order not to create unpleasant friction in the community. Such social workers had many ready adherents among our would-be assimilated and rich Jews.

There were certain Jewish educators who resented the intrusion of religion in their ultra-scientific curricula. Judaism, they said, was not a religion, but a way of life—that is to say, *their* way of life, which of course, was non-religious or anti-religious. Jewish education should, according to them, not be religious at all, only nationalistic and linguistic. At best the religious note might be smuggled in, but only as a concession to old-timers and cranks who do not know any better.

There were those Jewish spokesmen who offered Jewish nationalism as a substitute for Judaism,

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

forgetting that nationalism as such, unredeemed by a moral vision and responsibility, has sadly fragmentized our world, provincialized its peoples and is driving nations madly from one disaster to another; forgetting, further, that there is a widely-felt and widely-answered need for religion and religious institutions even among peoples whose national life is already fully established, who are in their own lands and who are possessed of a rich national culture. Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah felt the need to preach religion—God and obedience to God's moral law—to their people even though Israel in their day was established as a nation in its own land and spoke its own language. It is not possible to brush aside the spiritual needs of the Jews in the Diaspora, and their problems of survival as Jews in lands outside of Palestine, where most Jews will continue to live, merely by talking long, loud and enticingly about Palestine. The up-building of a Jewish national home in Palestine is one great, urgent and historically inescapable task of Jewry. The upbuilding of Jewish religious life in America and elsewhere throughout the world, inclusive of Palestine, is another. One is no substitute for the other. One is not opposed to the other.

Again there were other Jews who advised their people that Judaism could well be laid aside, now that the proletarian Messiah had appeared in the

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

land of the Slav, riding upon a droshky, and the Kingdom of Heaven was near at hand.

These latter shared the amazingly dogmatic romanticism abroad in the world, in the years following the World War, born out of a "Maranatha" complex, out of excessive messianic expectations in the fields of politics and economics, which tended to make the classic ideals and standards of religion appear old indeed, in fact, antiquated. This phenomenon occurred before. The nineteenth century believed that the laboratory would yield all truth. The early twentieth century believed that the machine would yield all good. Both hopes proved vain, but ere life exposed their vanity, they had a way of making the old codes and convictions of historic religions look outworn and slightly ridiculous. But they are not outworn. They are not old. They are not young. They are eternal. And they are unsensational, quite as unsensational as a mathematical formula, quite like the mathematical formulae to which physicists are now attempting to reduce this whole complex and exciting universe of ours.

Among them were certain Jewish intellectuals who after a prolonged excursion in various literary fields in the non-Jewish world, returned from their stratosphere of eminence to diagnose with clinical subtlety the ailments of Israel and to prescribe for it. Adorned with the halo of the returned prodigal and loudly acclaimed by a grateful

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

people, they disported themselves in a most lively fashion upon the American Jewish scene. Their technique was distinctive and almost unvarying. They began by denying categorically that there was anything alive in contemporary Jewry. That set them up at once as very objective and courageous, and their non-Jewish friends were especially delighted with such exhibitions of racial self-flagellation. They brushed aside contemptuously all that had gone on before and that was going on in the many Jewish movements for religion, education, literature, communal organization, or Zionism, all the experimentation and earnest wrestling of many thoughtful men and women who were daily engaged in the problems not of "*why*" Jews should survive, but "*how*." Blandly, they wrote all this off as either worthless or misguided. They were flippant about all contemporary Jewish leadership. This exalted them of course above the commonplace and cleared the decks for their own bid for leadership and their own epochal pronouncements. With great gusto they catalogued all the shortcomings of the Jewish people, but they made sure never to include themselves in the category of those condemned. They never said *our* decadence, *our* failures or *our* back-slidings . . . Another device was to simplify and idealize the Jewish past, but to give the present the brutally realistic low-down. This gave their utterances a prophetic flavor as well as an air of

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

learning, albeit of an unusual and startling quality. They reserved their best scorn for the idea of a religious mission for Israel. They showed how utterly absurd, even insolent, such a notion was. But when they finally came to offer their own solution and to present their own reason for Jewish survival, they smuggled in a little Jewish mission all of their own. The Jew must still be persecuted and must still die for a good cause. Only this time the good cause must not be the code of social justice and idealism of the prophets and the rabbis, but the communism of Karl Marx, or the pet economic system of some other economic theorist! . . .

All these false prophets have had their clamorous hour among us. But their hour is over. Thoughtful Jews are turning to the sure and classic highways of Jewish life and thought. We are not likely to be beguiled again, at least the men of this generation, by these prophets and their alien teachings.

Humanity has sickened of its Godless civilization. Because the spiritual interpretation of human destiny was allowed to languish, other interpretations have come to life and are now driving mankind mad. For when God is dethroned, His throne does not remain empty for long. Some false god, some Wotan, Moloch, Mammon or Mars soon occupies it. In place of piety, reverence, humility, compassion, self-sacrifice, other qualities—in-

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

solence, cruelty, aggression and combativeness—come to be extolled. Because men rejected the ideal of the sanctification of human life under God, they now have a world in which human life is held cheap, in which the stature of the individual has been reduced, his rights usurped by the state, his labor looked upon as a commodity and his life just a statistical item. Because men ignored the sovereignty of God's Moral Law, they now have a world in which men, parties and governments have set themselves up above all law. Where there is no longer the Law of God, there ensues the law of the Duce, the Fuehrer, or the Commissar, before which all men must tremble.

Now that lights are going out everywhere in the world, men are turning again to the Light of God. By that light men will find their way to a kingdom of just human values, achieved through just human methods. They will no longer seek freedom through slavery, justice through class-struggle, abundance through confiscation, knowledge through the burning of books, or unity through blood-purges and liquidations.

Jews can do no less. Jews will do no less. We sense an incoming tide of faith among our people, a faith charged in some instances with deep mysticism. It should not surprise us and it would be in keeping with similar moments in our past history, if our age should witness a strong mystic movement among our people. Such mystic move-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

ments followed the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal at the close of the fifteenth century and the appalling disasters which overtook Polish Jewry in the seventeenth century. The present-day expulsions of the Jews, the tragic experiences of myriads of refugees, the dismal plight of war-ravaged Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe, the stress under which Israel finds itself everywhere, coupled with the distressed mood of mankind generally, may give rise to a strong mystic movement which will express itself in religion and literature and in personal habits of thought and conduct.

In a sense, the problem of the survival of Judaism is much simpler in our day than at any time in the past. Our leaders need no longer expend the energy which was expended during the last century to persuade Jews to remain Jews. The doors of escape from Jewish destiny have been shut. The choice confronting intelligent Jews today is a very simple one. They have realized that God has not placed the shears of destiny—to be, or not to be—in their own hands. Forces which they have not summoned are driving all would-be escapists back upon their people. Somehow there has always been an element of unavoidable compulsion, of the inevitable, in Jewish experience. It is the “Be’al Korcha” element, the quality of shunless destiny. It was under such compulsion, the Rabbis declared, that our forefathers accepted the Torah at

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

Mount Sinai . . . “And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all; in that ye say: ‘We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.’ As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, will I be king over you . . . And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bonds of the covenant.”

The choice today is not between survival and extinction, but between doom and destiny, between burden and mission. Shall we live our Jewish lives greatly or meanly? Shall Jews walk “darkling to their doom” or advance confidently and exultingly to their destiny along the eternal road which stretches from Ur of the Chaldees to the distant messianic lands of “Acharit Ha-Yamim”—The End of Days? Shall we quarrel with our fate and beat helpless hands against the unyielding bars of circumstances or shall we, by a miracle of faith, remembering that “stone walls do not a prison make” cease to be the unwilling prisoners of circumstance, and, in the service of God and of God in man, become magnificently free?

“The Slave of God—he alone is truly free.” Our choice today is between the yoke of earthly kingdoms, which is grievously hard to bear, and the yoke of the Kingdom of God, which makes all other yokes easy to bear.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

What hands shall weave the loom of our future years? Our own hands, tender and skillful, drawing the golden strands from our own treasures of wisdom, piety, passion and dreams, which all the goodly folk from Abraham to our own day have stored for us, or shall alien hands, rude and unsympathetic, weave the web of our destiny and that of our children?

Now that many doors are closing, should we not open wide to our children the doors leading to the treasure-troves of their own people's spiritual and intellectual wealth, for their future sustenance, solace and pride? The days ahead will be hard days for them. Until the world completes this latest stage of its economic transformation and steadies itself again, after a long, violent period of readjustment, Jews, because they are everywhere an exposed minority, easily blamed and easily victimized, will be hammered on the anvil of every world event. The days ahead will be hard days for our children, but they need not be ignoble or unrewarding days. Give them their total heritage—the copious bounty of Judaism—the Torah, the synagogue, the prayer book, the noble literature and the beautiful language of their people. Give them the millennial companionship of their kinsmen and their kinsmen's heroic faith and dreams and their matchless saga, and they will be matched with their great hour. They will then come to understand what it is in our heritage that

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

has kept us alive; what it is that laid waste the paganism of the ancient world and now finds itself again in mortal combat with another paganism which it is also destined to destroy; what it is that makes their people the brunt of attack whenever privilege, power and reaction make a major onslaught on the precious hopes of mankind, and why the ancient ideals of their people are forever the battle cries of upstruggling humanity. They will then come to understand that it is not because we are weak or unworthy that barbarous governments have vowed to destroy us, but because we are strong, and they fear us. They do not fear us, but the faith which is in us, the torch which is in our hearts and the passion which is in our blood for the prophetic mandates of our Jewish heritage, for justice, freedom, brotherhood and peace, for the vision of Ir Ha-Tzedek, Kirya Ne'emanah—the City of Justice, the City of Faith, in place of the Ir Ha-Damim—the City of Blood, built upon the pride of blood and upon glory drenched in the blood of the conquered, the despoiled and the slain. The reckless adventurers of Power, who have put all ethics, all science and all religion in the service of a design for Power, who have made all ethics relative to tribal temperament and national interests and only Power absolute, who have forced upon civilian life the discipline, the dumb obedience, the drill, the barrack room, the court martial, the censor, the espionage system, the

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

whole code, complex and outlook of the military, and by so doing, have destroyed civilian life completely, these present-day heirs of the tradition of Ishmael, the Pere Adam—the Wild Man—"whose hand is against every man and every man's hand is against him" these heirs of the tradition of Esau, the Hairy Man, the Ish Tzayid, who sees life only as the hunter sees the hunted, and who delights "to live by his sword"—these abhor and dread the tradition of Jacob, the "Ish Tam"—the man seeking perfection through rational and moral pursuits, "Yoshev Ohalim," content to live in the peaceful tents of work and study, devoted to the greatness of morals instead of the morals of greatness . . .

And understanding this—and understanding further that they must now become the active trustees of this classic tradition of civilization, not merely "vague half-believers of our casual creeds"—they will, along with all other men of good will, feel themselves challenged. They will not be ashamed or cast down. They will face their world without fear or apology. They will not seek the world's approval—only God's. They will not be afraid of hostile voices—only of their own voice when silenced in fear. The insolence and naked impudicity of the heathens who rage will never humiliate them. Only their own apostasy, back-sliding and fear can humiliate them. They will try to be worthy of their great hour of testing!.

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

For each young heart will say: I stood with Abraham in his lonely vigil and read the destiny of my people in the stars. With Isaac I built the altar of a patriarch's stern faith and ultimate sacrifice. At Jabbok's ford I learned to wrestle through the night with the dark angel of despair and to wrest a blessing at the break of dawn. With Joseph I dreamt the dream of sheaves and stars and climbed the steps from the dungeon's pit to a prince's throne. I wandered with Moses, an alien prince among an alien people. Unshod, I knelt with him before the vision in the wilderness, and from within the inextinguishable fires of God I heard the Voice summoning to duty and freedom. I saw the lightnings and the clouds and heard the thunder roll around Mt. Sinai, and witnessed the everlasting covenant between my people and its God. I learned how to suffer and hunger in long and weary marches to reach a promised land. I was with Joshua fighting at Gibeon, and with Deborah by the waters of Megiddo, when the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. I stood with the blind Samson in his agony, and heard the wild cry of his desperate courage as he pulled down the temple over the Philistines. I heard Samuel admonish his people to remain free, and not to reject God by enslaving themselves to a king. I listened to the harp of the shepherd king, David, and saw the great king bow before the righteous wrath of the prophet, and before the majesty of the over-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

arching Law of God. I prayed with Solomon in the Temple which he dedicated as a House of Prayer for all peoples, and I learned of a God Whom Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain, and Whose compassion extendeth to all, even to the stranger who cometh out of a far country.

I marched with the resolute band of the prophets who came to destroy old worlds and to build new ones. I shuddered at the wrath of their spirit as they lashed out against oppression and injustice, against false gods and gilded idols, against blind leaders and lying prophets. I warmed at their infinite compassion for the weak, the denied, and the wronged. From them I learned the nature of mission and what a raging fire within one's bosom an unfulfilled mandate of God may become.

I wandered with my people by the slow-moving rivers of Babylon, and I heard their oath of deathless loyalty "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her cunning." I entered their humble and improvised synagogues, and I discovered that prayer and devout study are beautiful, and as acceptable to God as the sacrifices of the priests in the Temple, and the songs of the Levites.

I returned from captivity, and standing with those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, I learned how a people can build upon ruins. I sat with the sages and scribes who piously taught and inter-

## THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

preted the word of God, and molded a people's reverence for its spirit enshrined in a timeless Book. I moved among the mountains of Judea, pulling down the heathen altars, with the lion-hearted sons of Maccabees. I saw the miracle of a single cruse of spiritual oil inexhaustibly illumine the rededicated temple of their faith. I was a companion of the gentle Hillel who revealed to me the whole of the Law in the single kernel of neighborly love; and of Akiba who knew how to inspire a revolution, defy an empire and die a martyr.

And then into the long dark exile I wandered with my people, into many lands over which cross and crescent reigned, and I walked with them the weary highways of the world. I was with them when they drank deep out of the bitter chalice of pain, humiliation, and hate. But never did I fail to sense the stress of their imperious vision, their pride of a great past, their hope of a greater future, their superb courage, their unflinching faith. Philosophers, poets and saints never failed them in the lands of their dispersion, and the light of their Torah was never extinguished.

And then I saw the night lift and the dawn break; and into a reborn world, drenched with a new light of freedom and justice, I marched with them exaltingly. I heard the shackles fall from off their limbs. I saw the radiance of their emancipated minds and hearts. I beheld them, mounting as on

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

eagles' wings, rising to bless the world with matchless gifts of heart and mind in every field of human creation.

And now I see the night descend again, and into the dark and the storm my people are wandering forth again. Shall I leave them now? Can I leave them now? Shall I part company with this immortal band? They have become too dear and precious to me. The urgency of their pilgrimage is now coursing through my own blood. Their beckoning shrine is now also the shrine of my quest. Like unto the first pilgrim, out of Ur of the Chaldees, I, too, seized by the hand of God, am listening to the Divine summons: "Get thee out of thy country and from thy father's house into a land which I will show thee . . . and I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing" . . .

## **Israel**

### **I**

“WE recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel’s great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.”

This declaration made by the Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference in 1885 as part of its “Declaration of Principles,” is noteworthy in that it was the first of its kind ever made by an assembly of Jewish religious leaders, lay or cleric. No similarly constituted conference anywhere in the whole history of Israel up to that time declared categorically: “We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community.” Individual Reform Rabbis, like Geiger and Holdheim and many others, did of course, prior to 1885, proclaim this

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

thesis time and again. But it is significant that even the Frankfort Conference of 1845 which was dominated by the extreme left wing of the German Reform movement contented itself with a resolution that: "The Messianic idea should receive prominent mention in the prayers, but all petitions for our return to the land of our fathers, and for the restoration of a Jewish state should be eliminated from the prayers."

It is, of course, one thing to say that it is desirable, for one reason or another, for the Jewish people to remain where they are and not to strive after national restoration in Palestine. Galut nationalists of the Dubnow School, the proletarian Yiddishists of Soviet Russia and many others besides anti-Zionist Reform Rabbis would subscribe to such a doctrine. It is quite another thing to announce that: "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community."

Rabbi Wechsler clearly grasped this difference which seems to have escaped the notice of so many of his Reform colleagues of that day. He, too, was opposed to the Restoration idea but he nevertheless maintained that we were a people united not merely by religious ties but also by racial and national ties and by historical experiences commonly shared.<sup>1</sup>

It is quite possible that if a set of principles had

<sup>1</sup> See S. Bernfeld, *Toledot Ha-Reformatzia Ha-Datit* (Cracow, 1900), p. 49, note.

## ISRAEL

been adopted by the Frankfort Conference, or by its predecessor, the Brunswick Conference of 1844, a declaration similar to the one of the Pittsburgh Conference would have been adopted. But their very reluctance to adopt such a declaration of principles is itself significant.

The Philadelphia Conference of 1869 was the first to formulate a platform of Reform Judaism. This declaration likewise does not contain the creed of national adjuration such as is found in the Pittsburgh platform. The theologic cosmopolitanism of the framers of the Philadelphia constitution of Reform Judaism found sufficient peace of mind in the avowal that: "The Messianic aim of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state under a descendant of David, involving a second separation from the nations of the earth . . . We look upon the destruction of the second Jewish commonwealth not as a punishment for the sinfulness of Israel, but as a result of the divine purpose revealed to Abraham, which, as has become ever clearer in the course of the world's history, consists in the dispersion of the Jews to all parts of the earth, for the realization of their high priestly mission, to lead the nations to the true knowledge and worship of God."

The early Reform Rabbis of America were certainly more eager to formulate Principles and Declarations than were their confreres in Germany. They did not shrink from dogmatic pronounce-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

ments, nor did the old adage of Erasmus—*omnis definitio periculosa est*—discourage them. The fact that they had to reckon with far fewer restraints, traditional or institutional, in the New World, with an inchoate Jewish community and a minimum of local Jewish history, undoubtedly gave wing to their spacious and carefree theoretic dispositions. What impresses one, however, is the fact that it was in the United States, of all countries, where such a declaration on the subject of Jewish nationalism as one finds in the Pittsburgh platform was made. One cannot account for it except on the basis that its leading ideas were an importation, an exotic plant brought to these shores by immigrant rabbis from Germany and transplanted here without any particular reference to soil or climate. For there was nothing in the American Jewish scene in the eighties that made such a declaration urgent or significant. There was no political pressure from without, no need to placate organized anti-Semitic forces, no necessity to purchase political equality by any public renunciation of earlier ways of life and thought. Nor was there visible any strong nationalist movement among the American Jews of those days which called for contraremonstrance. One can readily understand the political motives behind the formal surrender of Jewish nationalism made by some Jews who lived in Germany during the period of struggle for emancipation and equality in the nineteenth cen-

## ISRAEL

tury, and by some groups of Jews in Russia in the eager, hopeful years of the early reign of Alexander II. But why in America?

The Reform movement in Germany did not originate in any great outpouring of spirit, or in any outburst of religious fervor or revivalism. Hence, while producing a vigorous polemic and Wissenschaft literature, it produced no great theologic or mystic literature. It was part of a comprehensive purpose to adjust Jewish life pragmatically to its new environment. It was a conscious expedient, not to reinstate prophetic universalism in Jewish religious thought—that was improvised rationalization—but to gain for the Jew full rights of citizenship by producing the proper effect upon the civil authorities. It was assumed, albeit erroneously, that Jewish separatism, manifested in speech, dress, folkways, rituals and ceremonies and in the messianic expectation of a return to Palestine, was responsible for the non-Jews' suspicion and hostility and for their reluctance to concede to Jews full political equality. The accusations of the cruder and less sophisticated anti-Semites of that day lent credence to that assumption. The solution, accordingly, lay in a thoroughgoing eradication of all evidences of separatism. For some Jews this meant total assimilation, apostasy not excluded. For others assimilation stopped short of religious surrender but religion purged of all nationalistic elements.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

The process began in the *Aufklärung* era whose symbol was Moses Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn was, of course, neither a reformer nor an antinationalist. He was a humanist who sought to find a place for the religiously observant Jew in the political and intellectual milieu of Western European civilization. But under the influence of the rationalism and cosmopolitanism of his day and in his eagerness to persuade the German people of the Jew's qualifications for citizenship, he "neutralized" Judaism theologically by denying its unique and challenging character as a system of beliefs and restricted it to the status of a revealed law or divine legislation which was in no way in conflict with the law of the land. Furthermore, he passed over in silence, though perhaps not intentionally, the national character of the Jewish people. Nationalism, be it remembered, was in Mendelssohn's day not a fully developed concept and the idea of separate nationalities within a state was not quite as repugnant and sinister as it became later. Nevertheless Mendelssohn's thesis that theology is a private matter and that Judaism is nothing more than a revealed code of laws, largely ceremonial, and his reticence touching the national destiny of Israel was seized upon by contemporaries as justification for assimilation. It was but one step, regardless of any logical nonsequitur, from the position taken by Mendelssohn to that of his friend and admirer, David Friedländer, who

## ISRAEL

in the Epistle of Several Jewish Fathers to Coun-cillor Teller offered to accept Christianity if cer-tain doctrines such as the Trinity were eliminated. Dorothea Mendelssohn, after her conversion to Christianity, felt justified in saying that her father, if he had been alive, would not have been saddened by her act. This first generation of enlightened Berlin, Frankfort and Viennese Jews were convinced that their political and social sal-vation lay in deorientalizing and Germanizing themselves, in making themselves like other people in order to be accepted as equals by other people. Of course they were naive. In the land of the poll-tax where Jew-hatred had always been the most vulgar, violent, and sustained in all Europe, they permitted themselves to indulge in wishful think-ing. They might have been cautioned by the cool admonitions of some of their Christian contem-poraries who advised them, as Teller deftly ad-vised Friedländer, not to confound Jewish efforts at religious modernization with the hope of politi-cal equality. Schleiermacher, the non-Jew, grasped the Jewish problem far more realistically and fun-damentally than did the German Jews of his day. He warned them that the important difference be-tween them and the non-Jewish world was not religious but national. It took the German Jews a century and a half to reconcile themselves finally to this unyielding fact.

The national character of the Jewish problem

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

became evident within a few years after the French Revolution. In the superb exultation of the Revolution the rights of citizenship were granted to the Jews of France. But when the revolutionary ardor had abated, grumblings and mutterings were soon heard against them. An anti-Semitic literature made its appearance. A particularly violent outburst of Jew-hatred made itself manifest in the German-speaking French province of Alsace. The attitude of Napoleon was anything but friendly to the Jews. He was considering the revocation or curtailment of their civil rights. The real motive which prompted the convocation of the Assembly of Jewish Notables in Paris in 1806—the forerunner of the Sanhedrin—was to cross-examine the Jews of France, to discover whether they were one hundred percent patriotic and deserving of the citizenship which the Revolution had bestowed upon them. The questionnaire submitted to the Assembly was to ferret out some possible excuse for the abrogation of their rights. Thus the sixth question read: "Do the Jews who are natives of France and are treated as French citizens by the law look upon France as their Fatherland?" The fourth question read: "Do the Jews consider the French their brethren or do they look upon them as aliens?"

The Assembly, of course, affirmed that the Jews of France regarded France as their Fatherland, and all Frenchmen as their brothers. They loudly pro-

## ISRAEL

claimed their loyalty to France and their readiness to defend her at all costs. They did not feel called upon, however, as did the Rabbis of the Pittsburgh Conference who were neither solicited for an opinion, nor were hard-pressed politically, to declare that the Jews were not a nation, only a religious community. Nor did they deny the hope of national restoration as did the all-too-zealous German reformers a few decades later.

But it was clear from the very fact that such an assembly had been convoked, and such questions asked, that nationalism would from then on be the central fact of Jewish experience not only in France, but everywhere, as soon as the Jews left their ghettos and reached out for civil and political rights. As in Germany, so also in France, there were Jews who met the increasing nationalist sentiments in their environment with a corresponding modulation of their own, although there did not transpire any such thoroughgoing religious reform movement among the French as among the German Jews. France was Catholic, religiously orthodox. There was no popular Protestant movement for the Jews of France to model themselves after.

Most marked, however, were the antinationalist tendencies among German Jews because German anti-Semitism was far more virulent and uncompromising, and German nationalism, following the War of Liberation, far more intense and jaundiced. The opposition to the political emancipa-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

tion of the Jews in Germany was bitter and relentless throughout the nineteenth century, continuing into the twentieth and achieving a complete victory under the Nazi regime in our day. Rising like a miasma from the poisoned soil of the Dark Ages Jew-hatred swept uninterruptedly like a pestilential plague through German life and literature infesting masses and classes alike, poisoning the hearts and minds of liberals as well as reactionaries of poets, philosophers, statesmen, historians, musicians and churchmen. The venomous anti-Jewish Nazi propaganda literature of the last twenty years—for this was initiated almost immediately after the World War—drew its inspiration, program and slogans from the prolific school of Jew-baiting preachers, pundits and pamphleteers of the Bismarckian era, and they, in turn, derived their leading ideas from their precursors in the post-Napoleonic era, whose mentor and model was the liberal, anticlerical philosopher Fichte. The latter's attitude is summed up in his statement: "The only way I see by which civil rights can be conceded to them (Jews) is to cut off all their heads in one night and set new ones on their shoulders, which shall contain not a single Jewish idea. The only means of protecting ourselves against them is to conquer their promised land and send them there." The Nazi cry, *Juda Verrecke*, is the authentic echo of the Hep, Hep, cry shouted by frenzied mobs in the streets of Frankfort and Hamburg a century

## ISRAEL

and more before. There is an unbroken line of ideologically formulated, metaphysically sanctioned and artistically embellished Judeophobia in Germany, centuries old, unmatched anywhere else in the world. It was in such a milieu that the Jews of Germany lived and struggled for their civil and political rights. If, therefore, Jewish lay and religious leaders of the reform group, and also of some of the Germanized orthodox and conservative groups, attempted to throw overboard all the racial and national baggage of Israel in the fond hope of calming this sea of hate, if they believed that they could exorcise anti-Semitism by professions of patriotism, and in an age of crescendo nationalism, could solve the Jewish problem by a corresponding diminuendo in Jewish nationalism, one can understand their plight and forgive their blindness, whereas one finds it difficult to account for the action of American reformers except on the grounds suggested above.

The Russian Jewish intelligentsia of the sixties and seventies resorted to the self-same unavailing tactics in a land in which there was far less literary anti-Semitism than in Germany, and in which the educated classes were definitely pro-Jewish. The antinational incantation which Holdheim chanted in Germany to appease the intolerant spirits of German nationalism, Pinsker, for example, chanted in Russia for many years before tragic, disillusioning events forced him upon the long

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

hard road which leads from assimilation to auto-emancipation. Many others among the best minds of Russian Jewry believed that in thorough Russification and assimilation lay the hope of ultimate salvation. They advocated the use of the Russian language and the abandonment both of Yiddish and Hebrew. At most they conceded a minimal religious distinctiveness. The idea of a Jewish national renaissance, or the reconstruction of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, was to them both fantastic and unwelcome. It was too reactionary an idea to entertain in an age of enlightenment when a favoring breeze filled their sails and they felt themselves carried along to delectable harbors of liberty and equality. It was too reactionary an idea and too illogical. But history has a logic of her own. A sharp reaction set in under the Liberator Czar Alexander II, and in 1871, the Jews of Russia sampled the gall and bitterness of a pogrom. The pogrom of 1871 and the more extensive and brutal pogroms of 1881 broke the back of assimilation in Russia. The solution clearly did not lie in the formula, "Russians of the Mosaic Persuasion." In 1882 the "Chovevei Zion" appeared on the scene. In the same year the converted Pinsker published his *Auto-Emancipation*. Russian Jewry set about solving its problems through self-help, through mass emigration to other lands, through the upbuilding of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, through national concentration and cul-

## ISRAEL

tural revival, and through revolutionary economico-political agitation and action in an effort to break the power of the hostile reactionary regime.

German Jewry might have learned the same lesson in the seventies when the great reaction set in and anti-Semitism flared up again. Treitschke, Bernhardi, Stöcker, Dühring, Marr—all the forerunners of the present-day Nazis—told them exactly how the German people felt about the Jews and why and what the German people would do to them when the hour of decision arrived. But the German Jews continued in their ineluctable optative mood, confident as was Rabbi Auerbach at the Rabbinical Conference of Frankfort, that: “In our day the ideals of justice and the brotherhood of men have been so strengthened through the laws and institutions of modern states, *that they can never again be shattered*. We are witnessing an ever nearer approach of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth through the strivings of mankind.”<sup>2</sup> This was uttered in Frankfort in 1845. Frankfort of 1941 is of course a sad and discouraging refutation of all this apocalyptic romancing in which German Jewry immersed itself in those days. The catastrophe of 1933 broke the back of assimilation in Germany. The whole improvised philosophy of Jewish history which is expressed in the doctrine that we are not a nation

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1931), p. 178.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

but a religious community has proved bankrupt and has been liquidated in the very home of its origin.

While the leaders of German Jewry, with the exception of course of the small but distinguished group of nationally-minded thinkers of the type of Moses Hess, Bodenheimer, Franz Oppenheimer, Wolffsohn, Ruppin, Hantke, Otto Warburg and Martin Buber, talked to unheeding Gentile ears about the unoffending status of the Jews as only another religious sect who in all other regards were *Echt-und-Nur-Deutschen*, the Germans were reading and absorbing the nationalistic theses, the political ethnologies and the Aryan race mythologies of Chamberlain, Friedrich Delitzsch, Günther, Spengler and Rosenberg, and the relentless processes of history, made *race* and *nation* the order of the day in Germany. In their name and at their behest the Jews of Germany have been disfranchised, stripped of all their hard-won gains of a century and a half, degraded as few Jewish communities have ever been degraded in the last two thousand years, and cast out. And now the remaining Jews of Germany are learning to meet the crisis of their inner and outer lives in the same way as did their Russian brethren a half century before—a strong national revival, the rediscovery of the cultural heritage of their own people and Palestine.

It would have been far better for the Jews of Germany if they had kept alive a strong national

## ISRAEL

self-consciousness. They would then have viewed the Nazi attack as a clash between national groups within a political state—something quite common in Central and Eastern Europe,—and their defeat would have been regarded by them as a political defeat and not as the loss of their entire patrimony, as banishment from their one and only cultural and spiritual home, as “driven away from their paternal board.”

How confidently Ludwig Geiger of Berlin proclaimed thirty years ago: “Any desire to form, together with his coreligionists, a people outside of Germany is, not to speak of its impracticability, downright thankless toward the nation in whose midst he lives—a chimera; for the German Jew is a German in his *national peculiarities* [sic!] and Zion is for him the land only of the past, *not of the future.*”<sup>3</sup> Some thirty years later, such German Jews whose *national peculiarities* were all German (in the eyes of Jews, of course, but not of Germans) were fleeing from Germany and finding refuge by the thousands in the land which was never really the land of their past but which must very definitely now become the land of their future. What is left of the Jewish Munich community, which forced in 1897 the transfer of the first Zionist Congress, scheduled to be held there, to Basel, is now grateful that some of its sons and daughters are able to find a haven and a new hope

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Jew. Enc.* XII, p. 673.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

in the land which those ungrateful and "un-patriotic" Zionists had built.

They were all too dogmatic, these Geigers, and Maybaums, and Vogelsteins! It is well to spin philosophies of Jewish history. It is dangerous to ignore the realities of Jewish experience. The timelessness and convenience of a given theory of Jewish life are not the only tests of its validity. Such a theory must be viewed against the background of the accumulated historical experiences of our people, tested as it were, in the crucible of the ages. Certainly, the hope that such a theory might be approved by our enemies gives it no sanction whatsoever; for our enemies can rationalize their hates quite as readily as we can rationalize our hopes, and they have never been known to relent because of any sweet and appetizing definition of Jewish life which a tendentious eclecticism offered them. Our virtuosity is wasted on a stringless fiddle . . .

## II

Ever since the first dispersion of our people in the sixth century before the Common Era, and the subsequent voluntary and involuntary migrations which by the beginning of the Common Era saw the Jewish Diaspora extend from the Gates of India to the Pillars of Hercules and from the

## ISRAEL

Caucasus to Ethiopia, and their further diffusion throughout Europe in the twenty centuries which followed, up to the present world-wide Diaspora, Jews have faced the twofold task of adjusting themselves to their given political and cultural environments and at the same time remaining loyal to themselves, as Jews. Because of this two-fold responsibility there was always an element of stress, tension, and conflict in Jewish life in the Diaspora. There always will be. Human history is replete with the clash and conflict of nations, races, peoples, religions and classes. The Jewish nation had its full quota of these conflicts when it was a political nation in Palestine. It certainly could not escape them as a nonpolitical and scattered nation in the Diaspora. Those who could not stand the strain of Jewish existence disappeared. Myriads of such Jews were lost to us. Many others were forcibly assimilated. Those who cannot endure the pressures of Jewish life today, their "burden of heritage" will also disappear—if they can. The newer racial anti-Semitism of the Nazi type is making such desertion extremely difficult. It is impossible to propound any formula for Jewish survival in the Diaspora—if we really mean *survival*—free from a measure of stress and conflict.

In our long history we never had a uniform plan or formula for survival. Such a formula, if it is to be something more than academic, must take into account not only the shifting interests and

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

needs of the Jews themselves but also the varied and changing political and economic milieu in which Jewish groups find themselves. A formula which would be valid for Jewish communities living in an empire like that of ancient Persia, Greece or Rome, embracing numerous nationalities and allowing them full national autonomy short of political independence, would not meet the situation of a Jewish community living in a closely-knit uni-cultural national state like modern France, Germany, or Italy; and a formula valid for these countries would not be adequate for a multi-national state like Poland, Czechoslovakia, or the Soviet Union. A Jewish community living in the midst of a people whose cultural *niveau* was far inferior to its own, would face altogether different problems of adjustment than one living in the midst of a superior culture.

But there was always the will to survive! Not in all sections of our people, to be sure, nor at all times, but certainly in sufficiently large sections of our people at all times to have enabled Israel to survive to this day. And at all times, the amazing will to survive of this tough and hardy people whom the Rabbis designated "the toughest among the nations," this *obstinatio Judaeorum*, this basic loyalty to their corporate existence and to the substantial elements of their total heritage, projected the necessary strategy, the adequate technique for survival. This strategy was dictated not by any

## ISRAEL

abstract speculation or by apologetics but by the life-hunger of the race, the indefeasible will to live, the compelling sense of destiny. The source of inspiration was always within, rising from the profound hidden depths of the racial, the instinctive, the primordial.

So great was this desire not to die as a people, that when it found its life besieged and threatened, it threw additional bulwarks around its security and raised stronger walls of defense. It did not hesitate to impose upon itself in the centuries following the second Destruction, a code of discipline, a regimen of so-called "practical commandments" which was far more rigorous than any military discipline, and which effectively safeguarded the individuality of the people and secured it against disintegration. The people, as a whole, never relaxed its vigilance. It never whittled down its requirements or its survival program to appease enemies or detractors. It never countenanced a minimal program to satisfy others. It always insisted upon a maximum program to protect its own life.

When the first great crisis developed in Jewish life following the national catastrophe in 586 B.C.E., the great leaders of the people immediately rushed to the defense of Israel which was threatened with extinction. The prophets, who had heretofore castigated their people for their idolatry and their moral waywardness and called down

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

upon them doom and destruction, now abruptly change their invective style and in words of comfort, encouragement and hope seek to heal the wounds and revive the broken spirits. The stern, unyielding Jeremiah, who before the national calamity wrote "with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond" and whose mouth was a sharp sword, now speaks like a compassionate father to his bruised and suffering children, lovingly, tenderly. "The people that are left of the sword have found grace in the wilderness, even Israel, when I go to cause him to rest . . . Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with affection have I drawn thee. Again will I build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel. Again shalt thou be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry . . . And they shall come and sing in the height of Zion and shall flow unto the goodness of the Lord . . . and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not pine any more at all."

Ezekiel, who in the tense, tragic interlude between 597 and 586, between the first and the second deportations, still called down imprecations upon the sinful in Zion and uttered terrible and frantic denunciations against them in the desperate hope of averting the calamity which he saw approaching, now, when the blow had fallen and the people lay crushed, dazed and hope-bereft, finds a

## ISRAEL

new voice and a new message. For now one must "breathe upon the slain that they might live." The people must not die! "Behold I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, O My people." . . . Faith and confidence must be rekindled. "Behold here am I, and I will search for My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are separated so will I seek out of all places whither they have been scattered in the day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them from out the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the habitable places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be; . . . I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick."

Powerful and exhilarating new motifs ring through the post-exilic prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Obadiah, Joel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and, of course, Deutero-Isaiah. There is the reverberating motif: "*Fear not!*" "*Fear thou not, O Jacob, My servant, saith the Lord, neither be dismayed, O Israel; For I will save thee from afar and thy seed from the land of their captivity.*" (*Jer. 30:10*) There is the motif: "*I will restore!*"

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

"And I will turn your captivity, and gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord, and I will bring you back into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive." (Jer. 29:14)

There is the motif: "*A new covenant!*" The old covenant was broken and had to be atoned for in blood and tears. A new covenant will now be made, a covenant of everlasting love and peace.

(Ezek. 37:26; Jer. 31:31) There is the startling new motif: "*Every man shall die for his own iniquity!*" There is no inherited guilt. The exiles should throw off the oppressive sense of guilt and the fear of retribution because of the sins of their fathers. (Jer. 31:28-9; Ezek. 18:4; 33:10.) The guilt has been paid off. (Isa. 40:2.) There is the motif: "*The testing in the furnace of affliction.*" Exile and suffering were intended not to crush Israel, but to cleanse, purify and strengthen him. There is the motif: "*The Eternity of Israel!*"

"Thus saith the Lord who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, that the waves thereof roar . . . If these ordinances depart from Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever." (Jer. 31:35-6) And finally there appears the new, imperial and magnificent motif: "*A light unto the nations.*" The mission idea! There is nothing of the mission idea

## ISRAEL

among the prophets who preached before the exile. It is a product of post-exilic times and received its classic formulation at the hands of the anonymous author or authors of Isaiah 40-66 (plus 34-35?) who, living during the Babylonian captivity, as some maintain, or in the latter half of the Persian period, as Torrey and others maintain, preached to a far-flung Diaspora of the new opportunity and challenge which has come to Israel, because of its dispersion, to convert the whole world to the worship of the One, true God—thus making Judaism the first missionary religion of mankind.

The pre-exilic prophets, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and the prophets of the transition era, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, know nothing of any historic mandate upon Israel to convert the world. The idea of mission did not enter into Jewish religious thought until almost a thousand years after the Jews had settled in Palestine and, in all probability, would never have made its appearance if the people had not been exiled. That Israel was a people chosen by God, Yahweh's "special possession," was of course a commonly accepted doctrine among the pre-exilic prophets. The sense of an inviolable covenant—Yahweh's covenant with Israel made at the time of the Exodus from Egypt—was dominant in their thought at all times. That this unique and covenanted relationship entered into between Israel and Yahweh, the God of Holiness, made Israel, as

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

long as it observed this covenant, a holy people in the midst of the surrounding idolatrous peoples, was also strongly felt by them. But that these convictions also carried with them the implication that Israel must be Yahweh's messenger to convert the heathen world was not entertained by them. The phrase in Ex. 19:6: "And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"—even if we assume that it is pre-exilic—says nothing about any mission to the Gentiles. Only very deft and generous homiletics can read such a meaning into it. The majestic apocalyptic vision of "The End of Days" found in Isaiah (2:2-4) and Micah (4:1-4)—the vision of Zion as the spiritual center of the world, and of all nations flowing to the house of God of Jacob in order to learn of His ways of justice and peace is concededly of post-exilic origin. So are all the references scattered through the writings of the prophets which tell of the future conversion of all the peoples of the earth, of their pilgrimage to Zion and of Israel as the servant of God who will bring this conversion about.

The source of the Mission Idea must therefore be looked for in the fact of the Dispersion and not in any automatic spiritual development of prophetic Judaism. It was evolved, consciously or unconsciously, in response to a desperate national emergency, out of the indomitable *will to live* of the race, as a means of strengthening the morale

## ISRAEL

of the scattered hosts of Israel and of giving meaning and dignity to their exile and their vast tribulations. It was a noble compensatory ideal, warranted by the fact that Israel *did* possess a religious outlook which far transcended that of the heathen, and a moral code of superior excellence. Israel knew itself to be a great people because of the spiritual heights to which it had attained in its religious and ethical development. This achievement made it contemptuous of the superstitions and idolatries of the world about it. But politically it was a small, scattered and defeated people—a *worm* among the nations, despised and contemned. Wherein shall this proud but defeated people, of which only a miserable remnant now remained in the waste and desolate places of Judea, whilst its hosts were captives and exiles in foreign lands, now find that indemnifying conception of destiny which would take the edge off their defeat, sweeten the bitterness of exile, and restore confidence to those utterly cast down? The answer was soon forthcoming—the cup of comfort to the parched lips:

“Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One, to him who is despised of men, to him who is abhorred of nations, to a servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves. . . . I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people.” (Isa. 49:7) “I the Lord have called thee in righteous-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

ness, and have taken hold of thy hand, and kept thee and set thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the nation; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." (Isa. 42:6-7.) Light and salvation will come to the whole world through Israel, who is God's servant, suffering in the present but destined to ultimate triumph and vindication. This is "the new things which I declare"—the wonderfully new gospel which the Second Isaiah now proclaims. This is the new vision and hope which the spiritual guides of Israel projected for their people in order to save them from death in defeat and exile.

### III

Note that this ideal of mission is not a denial, a revision or a substitution for any other concept heretofore held basic in Jewish thought but only a supplement, an addition, another bulwark for national security. It does not supplant nationalism. It re-enforces it. It does not look upon the dispersion as a blessing. It confronts it as a tragic fact which, however, must not be permitted to endanger the survival of Israel. It does not assume that the Jew must remain in exile in order that Yahweh may become the God of all the nations.

## ISRAEL

It does not proclaim that Israel is no longer a nation but only a religious community, whose sole *raison d'être* is the conversion of the Gentiles. It does not divorce religion from nationalism. The prophecies of Second Isaiah ring with the recurrent refrain of Israel's approaching restoration to Palestine. "Fear not, for I am with thee; I will bring thy seed from the east and will gather thee from the west. I will say to the north: 'Give up,' and to the south: 'Keep not back'; bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the end of the earth." (Isa. 43:5-6) And when the prophets speak of restoration they are not thinking of "the colonization of Palestine as a philanthropic effort deserving of general support" (a concession made to Palestine even by anti-Zionist Reform Rabbis), but of the rebuilding of the political life and home of the Jewish nation.

Zion rebuilt and Israel ingathered are the passionate themes of the prophets following the exile, and they did not regard them as being in any way irreconcilable with the hope of converting the whole world to Yahweh. The nations will come to Zion. Zion will become the religious center of mankind. "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great fury! . . . I shall return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. . . . Behold, I shall save My people from the east country and from the west country and I will

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

bring them and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." (Zech. 8:2)

Centuries later, Judah Halevi, reinterprets this Mission Idea for the Jews of his age and here again it is inseparably intertwined with the national aspirations, with people, land and language. Halevi takes up afresh the theme of Deutero-Isaiah. Israel among the nations is like the heart among the organs of the body, the most sensitive and the most important. Israel suffers for the sins of mankind, and through Israel's peculiar racial genius or its aptness for religion (or prophecy, as Halevi prefers it) the nations of the earth will be exalted. But Israel must live, if its unique gifts are to continue to bless mankind, and it must be restored to its own land where alone prophecy can find its congenial soil, and it must revive the Hebrew language which alone can be the perfect medium for such prophecy. The *Cuzari* closes on the note of the return to Palestine of the Rabbi who converted the king of the Chazars. Halevi may seem extreme in his views, but there can be no doubt that as far as essentials are concerned, he was in direct line of authentic Jewish tradition. He voiced the major convictions of Israel.

Any one, therefore, who attempts to exploit the historic Mission Idea of Israel as an argument against Jewish nationalism or against the rebuilding of Palestine or in justification of the *Galut* is guilty of gross distortion of an idea which is very

## ISRAEL

clearly and unambiguously defined in its original sources. The prophets did not believe that the Jews should continue to live in exile, nor that they should welcome the Dispersion as a blessing for the sake of their mission. They did not say that the Jews were exiled *in order* that they might become God's witnesses to the Gentiles. They exhorted the Jews in exile to find strength in defeat. They sought to sustain them by the thought that though they had been driven into exile their significance in the economy of the world was not at an end. On the contrary, they now had the opportunity, through the example of their steadfastness to Yahweh, and through the moral tone of their lives, to acquaint the whole heathen world with their great spiritual heritage—the true knowledge of God, and the nobility of His worship.

## IV

The Jews, during the chaotic centuries which followed the Destruction, employed *every* means to preserve their national life. We have seen how the prophets sought to restore the morale of the people by giving those living inside and outside of Palestine an inspiriting and sustaining sense of destiny. The people, themselves in exile, once the first shock of terror and dismay was over, recovered their ancient confidence and loyalties. By the

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

rivers of Babylon they vowed eternal loyalty to Zion, their national home: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her cunning!" The priests elaborated a code of ritual and ceremony and a religious discipline which in a practical way was intended to shelter the life of Israel from "the uncleanness of the Gentiles," and to keep it a separate and distinct people. In Judea the returned exiles under Ezra, facing a new crisis, instituted a most drastic process of national reconstruction in order to save the life of the community. In his zeal for the preservation of the faith, Ezra ordains that the foreign women whom the Jews had married should be put away, as well as the children born of them, and that they should "separate themselves from the peoples of the land." Ezra draws no distinction between those belonging to the peoples of Ammon and Moab, against whom there existed of old a law of perpetual exclusion from the "congregation of Yahweh" (Deut. 23:4) and other peoples like Edom, Egypt, against whom no such law existed. Ezra did not even tolerate proselytism, for he does not suggest the conversion of these foreign wives as an alternative to their divorce. This attitude was shared neither by the prophets who preceded Ezra nor by the Rabbis of later times. The Halacha recognized proselytism and accorded full status to the proselyte, incorporating him unreservedly into the life of the nation. "The proselyte is as one

## ISRAEL

newly born." Only an acute crisis, the fear of extinction, ever present in the life of this small, harassed community which had been delivered over "to the sword, to captivity, to spoiling and to confusion of face" could have called forth such harsh and extreme acts. The nation withdrew as it were, to its last citadel, for a final stand against the forces which threatened to overwhelm it. Ezra and Nehemiah did not *nationalize* the God-concept of Israel in the sense of localizing it. They did not turn back the hands of the clock in the religious evolution of Israel—as some Biblical critics imagine. Yahweh is still the One and Universal Lord: "Thou art the Lord, even Thou alone. Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon." (Neh. 9:6) But the hour now demanded another emphasis; the immediate task for the Judean community was not to save the world but to save itself. Hence the unusually strong emphasis upon nation and language. The Samaritans are rejected because, though they professed the same faith, were nevertheless not of the same nation as Israel. Nehemiah rises to the defense of the *language* of Israel—for national revival always goes hand in hand with language revival and the abandonment of the Hebrew speech was rightly interpreted by Nehemiah as evidence of assimilation: "In those days also saw I the Jews that had married women of Ashdod, of Ammon,

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

and of Moab and their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I quarreled with them, and cursed them and smote certain of them . . ." (Neh 13:23-25)

Nation, land, language were always vital and indispensable concepts in Jewish life, indissolubly associated of course with religion. It was never a case of one or the other. They were all one, organically united. There were times when one or the other had to be stressed. Whenever one of these factors of survival was threatened, the strong instinct of the people rallied to its defense. Hence in our history we find eras of accentuation of one or another of these several concepts and eras of attenuation. But never was there abandonment of any one of them—until the time of the Reform Rabbis of Germany, which is, of course, a very recent and seemingly a rapidly vanishing phenomenon.

The sound, practical sense of Israel and its experience through many centuries of partial or total dispersion over the earth, saved it from being dogmatic or fanatic concerning any of these concepts. On one subject only was Israel fiercely dogmatic—the monotheistic article of its faith. On all else it was latitudinarian.

Thus Jewish life never adopted any doctrinaire, arrogant and militant nationalism such as is devo-

## ISRAEL

tating the life of the Western World today. It found a proper balance between nationalism and internationalism. It did not sacrifice one to the other. Jewish nationalism was always strong but never militaristic, competitive and arrogantly provincial. It was never an excuse for domination or for the shameless exploitation of other nations. It recognized the mandates of international morality and the practical as well as the spiritual interdependence of all nations. It visioned a world-embracing federation of free peoples united under the eternal laws of God, and in that unity, finding abiding peace and security.

Israel reconciled in life and practice ideas seemingly irreconcilable. It was a case of "the angel Michael, who is all snow, and the angel Gabriel, who is all fire, standing side by side, but not harming one another." Thus it spoke of a Universal God, "the God of the spirits of all flesh" but at the same time it also spoke of "the Lord God of Israel," the God of the people of Israel. It extolled the race as "holy seed" but admitted members of other races into the racial family through proselytism and it recognized no biologically superior and inferior races. It always longed for national restoration to Zion, but, from the days of Jeremiah on, it admonished its children, dwelling in foreign lands, to live as good citizens, "to seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

it, for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." (Jer. 29:7) It prescribed a complete code of Jewish law for its members living in and out of Palestine covering every phase of life, but it also lay down the qualifying precept: "the law of the land is the binding law." In all matters of law, involving no basic tenets of faith, the law of the land is final. It exalted the Hebrew language. It was "the holy language." It made the teaching of it obligatory. Yet it permitted, though it did not counsel, prayer in all languages, and translations of the Bible were made and, by and large, welcomed as early as the third century B.C.E. The Jews welcomed Greek culture until it showed itself a peril to Jewish culture, when they violently rejected its antipathetic phases.

Doctrinaires of the white or black, either-or variety, who like to have life and history simplified to fit in neatly into some theoretic framework which they arbitrarily construct to serve their tastes or their times, are impatient with these seeming incongruities and contradictions in Jewish life. They lightly reject whatever they find practically or ideologically inconvenient. They are unaware of, or they consciously ignore, the strong life-sense, the survival-wisdom, the adjustment-genius of the people which produced them. A religious creed, once you grant its premises, may be logically consistent and undeviating. But a people is not a creed, and a people's life and culture are deter-

## ISRAEL

mined by historic forces which are not logical. Israel, confronted through most of its history with an ever changing and threatening environment, and wishing to survive, had to take into account all the economic, political, sociologic and psychologic facts in its environment and had to make proper adjustments to them.

But it never sacrificed essential values to temporary expediency. It was a case of "take hold of the one, but of the other also do not withhold thy hand." There were many movements and sects within Israel during its long history—Sadduceism, Pharisaism, Essenism, Christianity, Hellenism, Karaism, Kabalism, Chassidism, Haskalah, Reform, Zionism. Each in its day, quite naturally, led to bitter conflict and partisanship. That is true of all such movements among all peoples. But the Jewish people found room for all of them within its fold, except for Christianity. Even the Karaites who created such turmoil and dissension in Jewish life were never outlawed by our people. Thus, for example, Maimonides, in the very midst of a bitter feud between the Rabbinites and the Karaites, a feud already centuries old in his day, nevertheless urges a policy of brotherly toleration towards the Karaites, to treat them as Jews, circumcise their children, bury their dead, comfort their mourners, and treat their wine as ritually fit. For, after all, the Karaites were loyal Jews, regardless of their opposition to the tradition and authority of the

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

Rabbis. They were devoted not only to the God of Israel and the Torah but to the land of Israel. Shortly after the rise of Karaism, groups of Karaites, forsaking home and friends, migrated to Palestine and established communities known as the "Mourners of Zion." Their zeal for Palestine exceeded that of the Rabbinites. They loved the Hebrew language, and the birth of the science of Hebrew grammar and philology in the Middle Ages is to be credited to them.

But in the case of Christianity, it was the Pauline insistence upon a religious creed entirely divorced from nation, race, land or language and from the disciplines of Jewish law, that finally placed the movement outside the sphere of Jewish life.

## V

As a messianic movement, inspired by the millennial expectations of that age, preaching the advent of the Kingdom of God, and calling men to repentance and moral purification in order to escape "the birthpangs of the messianic times" and to be worthy of admission into the Kingdom, the messianism of Jesus might well have found a place, as for a time it actually did, among sections of Jewry who detected neither heresy nor apostasy in it. The early Judaeo-Christians in Palestine

## ISRAEL

were Jews in all regards. But Paul, a product of the culturally diluted Hellenistic Diaspora, entertained views which centuries later Reform Rabbis in Germany and in America came to entertain. The sense of belonging to a Jewish nation and the desire to preserve that nation and to re-establish the Kingdom of Israel were hardly present with him. Race had no significance. Race, in Pauline theology, is metamorphosed into a universal society of believers. "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children. . . . They which are the children of the flesh, these are *not* the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (Rom. 9.6) Unlike Matthew, Paul is not interested in establishing the Davidic descent of Jesus. (I Tim. 1:14) Jesus' Jewish origin is of no particular moment to him. Although Jesus directed his message—a thoroughgoing Jewish messianic message—specifically to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"—and was not particularly interested in proselytism, Paul called himself the "apostle to the Gentiles," and his chief concern was to carry the gospel of salvation to the non-Jews. Peter, he declared, was intrusted with the good news to the Jews, he to the heathen. (Gal. 2:7) The mastering idea of Paul was that the millennium was fast approaching when the purging and winnowing of mankind would take place, and that therefore the whole human race should be

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

rapidly converted to the one true faith. This one true faith consisted in the abjuration of polytheism and idolatry and in leading a pure life—in other words—ethical monotheism. Such a faith had been in the keeping of Israel since the days of Abraham. But because of the Law of Moses—the ceremonial and ritual law, e.g., circumcision, the observance of Sabbaths and Holy Days and the dietary laws—the pure faith had been obscured, veiled even to Israel (II Cor. 3:15) and made difficult of acceptance by non-Jews. The coming of the Messiah in the person of Jesus put an end to the reign of this Law. Now conversion to the true faith is accessible to every man merely through faith—faith in the One, Universal Lord and in the atoning power of the death of Jesus. This latter idea is essential to the doctrine of Paul. The sin of Adam brought death as its punishment upon all the generations of men.<sup>4</sup> This sin had to be atoned for by a sacrificial death—for only such a sacrifice could be proper atonement for such a sin—before men could obtain the hope of eternal life. The crucifixion of Jesus was that sacrifice. All men must die at the approach of the End of Days, because all men are sinners. But Jesus saved them from death by means of his own death. In his death all who believe in him die “figuratively” to their old selves and are reborn into the new life. They, thus, come redeemed to the threshold of the

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Mid. R. Deut.* 9.4. *Per contra*, cf. *Sab.* 146a.

## ISRAEL

Kingdom. Henceforth, every one, regardless of race, or nation, who eschewed idolatry and accepted the sacrifice of Jesus, dying for all men, will "walk in the newness of life" and will inherit eternal life. It is not the observance of the laws of the Torah which bestows life eternal, i.e., admission into the Kingdom of God which is fast approaching. Immortal life comes through accepting the blood sacrifice of Jesus. In messianic times the Law is not needed. "In the Days of the Messiah there is neither merit nor guilt."<sup>5</sup> "All commandments are abolished in the world to come."<sup>6</sup> For the whole purpose of the Law was disciplinary and pedagogic.<sup>7</sup>

But what then was the purpose of giving the Law by God to Israel, and what is the significance of the election of Israel—a doctrine which Paul accepts. (Rom. 11:29) In Paul's reply one finds the clue to the reason why the Jewish people had finally to reject him and his religious teachings. The giving of the Laws of the Torah to the Jews carried with it the possibility and the opportunity of transgressing them. It is the Law that gives sin its power. (I Cor. 15:56) "Sin is not imputed where there is no law." (Rom. 5:13) Thus the Laws of the Torah were ordained that offenses against them by the Jews might multiply, so that there would be greater need for the grace of God

<sup>5</sup> *Sab.* 151b.

<sup>6</sup> *Nid.* 61b.

<sup>7</sup> *Mid. Tan., Shemini*, ed. Buber. p. 30.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

which came through the atonement sacrifice of Jesus. The disobedience of the Jews was therefore the Gentiles' opportunity to gain salvation. As far as Paul's new message of glad tidings is concerned, the Jews are treated as enemies of God. (Rom. 11:28) But because they had been chosen by God and are beloved by Him for their fathers' sakes, they, too, will be saved from sin through the grace of God ultimately, after all the heathen have been redeemed. Thus Israel, in the hands of this fervid, mystical theologian, is no longer a nation but a theologic pawn. The national character of the Jewish messianic ideal is ignored, as it was ignored centuries later by Reform Rabbis. It is dissolved in a universal salvationism, quite like the denationalized "Messianic Age" of the Reform Rabbis. There is, however, one exception: With Paul *all* nations vanish into the spiritual anonymity of Kingdom Come. With the Reform Rabbis, only the Jewish nation. *Their* theology took zealous toll of Jewish nationalism but stopped short at German, Austrian, French or American nationalism. . . . With Paul the age-old hope of the ingathering of the dispersion and the deliverance of Israel from the yoke of Rome gives way to an apocalyptic conversionism in which Israel is only incidentally significant because in olden days God had announced in advance the good news to Abraham in the words: "all the heathens will be blessed through you" and through the Jews this blessing

## ISRAEL

reached the heathen. (Gal. 3:8ff). This is the sole role ascribed by Paul to Israel in the economy of world-salvation. With the nationalist prophets of Israel, a reborn and politically rehabilitated people, strong and secure in its own land, was to become a light unto the world. The nations of the earth would flow unto Zion redeemed, "for out of Zion would go forth the Torah." With Paul, Torah was a form of slavery, and Zion had no significance as the capital of a nation but only as the locale of a Temple of whose ritual he scarcely approved. No wonder that this new program of proselytism which demanded the sacrifice of so many of the essential survival-values of Israel, met with stubborn resistance not alone from Jews who had not accepted Jesus as the Messiah but even from the early Judaeo-Christians.

In classic Judaism there were always two elements, one universal, i.e., pure religion intended for all men, the other local, i.e., the laws of the Hebrew polity, intended for Jews only. Paul, the Roman citizen and the product of the Mediterranean cultural melting-pot, accepted the first. The second he regarded principally as a stumbling block in the way of the first. Therefore, nothing but faith mattered. The Jewish nation, land, language and law were of small consequence, particularly in view of the approaching millennial denouement. But not all the early followers of Jesus felt as he did. A bitter struggle raged within

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

the early church against these teachings of Paul. The Palestinian Judaeo-Christians were neither antinomists nor antinationalists. They were glad to welcome converts to their Messianic Judaism but only as "Ge-re Tzedek" proselytes who were willing to accept not only the principle of the Unity of God and the "Seven Noachide Laws, (i.e., "Ge-re Toshav"), but also the entire discipline of the Law inclusive of the Abrahamitic rite, Sabbath and Holy Day observances and the dietary laws.

Paul's views prevailed in the new sect. As a result the sect steadily receded from Jewish life and became at first non-Jewish and then anti-Jewish. In the national uprisings against Rome in 70 and 135 the Judaeo-Christians refused to participate. Their loyalty was now to an idea, not to a people.

## VI

There is a striking similarity between the theoretic position taken by Paul and that taken by the extreme leaders of Reform Judaism; and had these men been as consistent as Paul, and had they translated their loquacity about the Mission of Israel into a real missionary propaganda as did Paul and his followers, the logic of events would have brought about the secession also of their group from Jewish life. But with Paul, the mis-

## ISRAEL

sion was a race to save the world. With the Reform Rabbis it was a rocking-horse race. These reformist Rabbis, too, were denominationalized Jews. They, too, conceived of Israel as "a candle which lights others and consumes itself." They, too, tried to erect Jewish life upon the slender, sagging stilts of a few theoretic abstractions. They, too, felt the Law to be a burden. They focused *their* antinomist odium on the Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch. The Bible they spared, for after all the Bible was sacred also to Christians. . . . But those laws of the Bible, against which Paul inveighed—circumcision, Sabbath observance and dietary laws—came under their obloquy also. The use of the Hebrew language in public worship, they maintained, was not only unnecessary from a legal point of view but from any other point of view as well. And while Jewish Rabbis were thus practically consigning the Hebrew language to oblivion, Dohm of Breslau, a Christian, rose to its defense, urged its retention by Jews as the language of the prayers and as a bond of unity, and reminded them that if many Jews no longer understood the language, the solution lay not in abandoning the language but rather in teaching it more energetically than ever. These Rabbis, too, believed that the world was on the threshold of great, new beginnings. To them, too, as to the apocalyptic visionaries of the first century, the Kingdom of God was just around the corner. . . .

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

They, too, converted the national messianic hope of Israel into a Pauline apocalypse.

A messianic hope not bound up with the restoration of Israel to Palestine is simply not found in Jewish religious literature anywhere from the time of the Second Isaiah to our own day, except, of course, in the writings of these Reformers and some of the Hellenistic apocalyptic writers, who through allegory and other devices attempted to universalize the teachings of the Torah, so as to impress the non-Jewish world with the excellency of the Jewish faith, and who converted the Jewish national Messiah into an "incarnation of a divine power who should judge men at the end of days." National restoration was the very heart of the messianic ideal which was a political-spiritual concept from its very inception. To substitute for this national ideal an antinational, purely transcendental, nebulous *Messianic Age*, on the plea of religious evolution, is to be guilty not of revision but of distortion. It is both new and counterfeit.

Fortunately the views of these men did not prevail. They were quickly challenged. The masses of Jewry recoiled from them. The facts of life soon dissipated the fumes of their universalistic romancing. They have now been discredited in the very land of their nativity. The United States, because of its peculiar political and social configuration, for a time gave scope to these ideas and they were received with considerable favor among cer-

## ISRAEL

tain classes of our people, particularly among our German-Jewish immigrants. But they are being rapidly abandoned. The very men who framed the Pittsburgh Declaration felt the inadequacy of their definition. Twice in the Declaration they speak of the "Jewish people." They do not define the term "people," but the very fact that they resorted to the term indicates that they felt that the term "religious community" somehow failed to cover the full canvas of Jewish realities.

Dr. Kohler, who convoked the Pittsburgh Conference, and helped to draft its Declaration, found it necessary in his "Theology" to supplement this definition of Israel as a religious community, with the concept of race. "The Jew is born into it (Judaism) and cannot extricate himself from it even by the renunciation of his faith, which would but render him an apostate Jew. This condition exists, because the racial community formed, and still forms, the basis of the religious community. It is birth, not confession, that imposes on the Jew the obligation to work and strive for the eternal verities of Israel, for the preservation and propagation of which he has been chosen by the God of history."<sup>8</sup>

But why is the concept of "race" any more exalted than "nation"? Why should racial fatalism commit one irrevocably to religious beliefs which of all things should be voluntary? If one, not of

<sup>8</sup> K. Kohler, *Jewish Theology* (New York, 1918), p. 6.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

the race, can become a Jew by accepting Judaism, why cannot one "extricate" himself from Judaism by rejecting it? Identifying Judaism with race is no more logical, and in our day, far more provocative than identifying it with "nation."

Dr. Cyrus Adler, though belonging to the Conservative wing, also believes that the Jews are only a religious community, but he is quite as vigorous in *denying* that the Jews are a race. "Sometimes people say that they are Jews by race and sometimes that they are Jews by nationality. No people is suffering today more from this race or national theory than the Jewish people, and to the extent that these doctrines have been preached, we have given a weapon into the hands of our enemies . . . The German State does not close synagogues [sic!], it does not forbid religious teachings. The state outlaws the Jew on the race theory. . . . Why then should we fall into this trap? Why should we declare ourselves a race or *kultur*? . . . Let us get into our minds definitely once for all that even before the destruction of the Temple, even before the destruction of our nation in Palestine, we became a religious community, and *that* we are, or we are nothing."<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Adler labored under that fond illusion, referred to above, that if our enemies would only realize that we are a religious community and not a race or a nationality, they would automatically

<sup>9</sup> Address before the Seminary National Council, June 2, 1935.

## ISRAEL

cease to hate us. But this highly adjustable *diplomatic* philosophy of Jewish history deceives no one. Instead of centering his attack upon the whole false race-theory of the state which, in Germany, had its origin in the Hegelian thesis that the state must be a national unit based on race homogeneity, Dr. Adler counsels the Jews to abandon entirely the very concept of race as a factor in Jewish survival. This is in keeping with those sad and futile tactics of so many Jews in the last one hundred years who tried to whittle down the content of Jewish life in order to meet a temporary political emergency. In November, 1938, the German State did not close the synagogues. It burnt them to the ground! . . .

It is idle to talk of Jews as no longer a nation but a religious community, in the face of the fact that following the last World War millions of Jews were recognized by the law of nations as national minorities in Poland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, millions more as a distinct nationality in Soviet Russia, where an autonomous Jewish region has actually been attempted, and hundreds of thousands in Palestine where a Jewish homeland is being created under the terms of a mandate of the League of Nations which recognizes not only the national existence of the Jewish people but its historic claim to its national home. Hitler would, of course, deny to the Jews any status, and in the countries conquered by him or within his political

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

orbit, their position is without any legal definition at the moment. It is clear, however, that if Jews remain in Europe at all, their status will have to be fixed sooner or later, and it is not likely that they will be treated merely as a religious community. It is not only idle today to repeat the "religious-community" shibboleth of the early Reformers but also quite fantastic.

It should be borne in mind, also, that nationalism is sometimes forced upon the Jew, even when he does not particularly crave it. In the struggle between the numerous nationalities in Eastern and Central Europe, each clamoring for self-determination, the Jews, living in their midst, have had to take sides or to declare themselves to be an independent nationality. It was a case either of accepting the culture of Ruthenians, Croatians, Slovaks and of other nationality groups, which were far inferior to their own, or of asserting their own. No Jewish group was so completely denationalized as were the Jewish communists of Russia. They were antireligious, anti-Zionist, anti-Hebraist. They were internationalists. Their sole allegiance was to the proletarian class. And yet, with the triumph of communism, these very Jewish communists were forced by the logic of events not only to carry on as members of a distinct Jewish nationality in Soviet Russia but to undertake the building of an autonomous Jewish settlement in Siberia. One cannot in the face of these political realities

## ISRAEL

in Jewish life, maintain the theologic fiction that the Jews are only a religious community.

And what of the myriads of our people who are non-religious or antireligious, who can accept neither the theology of Judaism nor its code of religious observances, Orthodox or Reform, and who are yet very loyal and active Jews? Is there no room for them in the household of Israel? There would not be, if we regarded Israel as a "religious community" exclusively, and if we adopted the dogma: "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus.*" But being a nation, and not a religious community, there is room in Israel for *all* Jews, except for those who do not wish to be Jews and who declare: "We have no portion or inheritance in our father's house . . ." And these are being tragically reminded in many parts of the world today that even though they forsake their inheritance in their father's house they will not find a portion or an inheritance anywhere else in the world . . .

Should we not rather regard it as providential that, in these days when formal religion is losing its hold upon great numbers of our people, the national and racial sentiment has been rekindled among many of them so that they wish to remain Jews and to link up their destiny with the destiny of Israel in some if not in all of the spheres of its creative life?

The Jewish people produced the Jewish religion, but people and religion are not synonymous

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

terms. The Jewish religion—and I use the term in its customary sense, for I do not believe that a clever neology, that is, the use of a word in a new and unsanctioned sense, is equivalent to a new theology—is a colossal and world-revolutionizing concourse of spiritual ideas unfolding itself in the life of a people of a particular character and temperament, but the Jewish religion does not exhaust the full content of the Jewish people. In relation to its religion, Israel is both immanent and transcendent, as is every great artist in relation to the creation of his genius.

The Jewish religion is the crowning achievement of our people and our supreme gift to civilization. It possesses such vast reservoirs of spiritual truth that it has been able to sustain and inspire generations upon generations of our people and to retain their sacrificial loyalty under all circumstances and upon all levels of culture. It thus became the strongest factor in the survival of our people, the “kesher shel kayama,” the enduring tie. It is doubtful whether the Jewish people can long survive in the Diaspora without it—unless the other survival factors are reinforced to a degree which will compensate such a major loss. Jewish secular cultural autonomy may be possible in countries where the Jewish groups achieve minority rights. In such countries the Jewish group may survive even if divorced from religious loyalties. This is possible, though not probable. But in

## ISRAEL

countries where minority rights are not possible, where there exists no active anti-Semitism which forces the Jew back upon himself, the task of Jewish survival will become increasingly difficult as religion loses its influence upon Jews and therewith also its power of national conservation. Those religious leaders, therefore, who are today teaching the religion of Israel to their people are not only leading them to fountains of living truth which can sweeten and refresh their individual lives, but are also conserving the most potent force which, throughout the ages, has preserved the Jewish people.

But such religious leaders should not attempt to substitute a part for the whole—even if it is the major part. Havelock Ellis, in his introduction to J. K. Huysman's *A Rebours* makes the interesting observation that the essential distinction between the classic and the decadent in art and literature is to be found in the fact that in the classic the parts are subordinated to the whole, whereas in the decadent, the whole is subordinated in the parts. "The classic strives after those virtues which the whole may best express; the latter manner (the decadent) depreciates the importance of the whole for the benefit of its parts, and strives after the virtue of individualism."

Jewish life also possessed in its great epochs this classic balance, and the aim of religious leaders today should be to restore it. Many tributaries flow

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

into the historic channel of Jewish life. In recent years some zealous and mostly uninformed partisans have attempted to reduce Jewish life to what is only a fraction of itself—to race or nationalism or folkways or theologic abstractions. Quite unconsciously they are all falsifying Jewish life. It is a mark of decadence in the Diaspora that so many of our people have lost the sense of the classic harmony in Jewish life and are attempting to substitute a part for the whole.

It is the *total* program of Jewish life and destiny, its vast inclusiveness and completeness that the religious leaders of our people should dwell on today—the religious and moral values, the universal concepts, the mandate of mission, as well as the *Jewish people itself*, and its national aspirations—in other words, the Jewish people as a religious-national entity. Thus the strength and security of our life will be retrieved, and whether in Palestine or in the Diaspora, we shall move forward unafraid upon the road of our destiny.

## In the Midst of Many Peoples

### I

SOME peoples have a larger element of group mysticism in their make-up than others, and are more largely addicted to race idolatry. Racial mysticism, like some other forms of mysticism, is at bottom an historical throwback, a hankering after older forms of social life and organization, a retroversion to what is thought to be the protoplasmic soul of the people. One hundred years ago, Heinrich Heine called attention to the recurrent manifestation of mysticism and romanticism among the German people. In Nazism, Germany is again revealing these strong mystic, primitivistic, and collectivistic tendencies. Racism in Germany did not, of course, originate with the Nazis. It has a long history which can be traced from Fichte through Marr, Treitschke, Dühring, to Houston-Stewart Chamberlain, Spengler, Rosenberg, and all the latter-day saints of German race mythology. Mr. Chamberlain, whose influence on the thought of modern Germany cannot be overestimated, blandly and dogmatically declared: "It is only

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

shameful indolence of thought, or disgraceful historical falsehood, that can fail to see in the entrance of the Germanic tribes into the history of the world the rescuing of agonising humanity from the clutches of the everlastingly bestial.”<sup>1</sup>

Hitler who has succeeded in embodying the chaotic race vagaries of these theorists into the basic law of Germany and who is imposing it on many other countries is even more ecstatic: “What we see before us of human culture today, the results of art, science, and techniques, is almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan. But just this fact admits of the not unfounded conclusion that he alone was the founder of higher humanity as a whole, thus the prototype of what we understand by the word ‘man.’ He is the Prometheus of mankind, out of whose bright forehead springs the divine spark of genius at all times, forever rekindling that fire which in the form of knowledge lightened up the night of silent secrets and thus made man climb the path towards the position of master of the other beings on this earth. Exclude him—and deep darkness will again fall upon the earth, perhaps even after a few thousand years, human culture would perish and the world would turn into a desert.”<sup>2</sup>

This politically motivated racism divides man-

<sup>1</sup> Houston-Stewart Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1913), p. 495.

<sup>2</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York, 1930), pp. 397-8.

kind into two groups—Aryan and non-Aryan.<sup>8</sup> For all practical purposes the Aryan race is identified with its élite representatives, the Germans, and the term non-Aryan has so far been restricted legally only to the Jews. This division of mankind among Germans and Jews ought to be flattering to both peoples. And if it were only a matter of fanciful speculation and of patriotic extravaganza, the whole subject could be jocularly dismissed. Unfortunately, this is no longer the playful theme of mere metaphysical speculation. It has entered the field of Realpolitik, and it is provoking wars of conquest, devastation, death, and colossal human suffering.

The race thesis of German political ethnology is, of course, not accepted by scientists. Racists would like to give to their romancing an air of scientific objectivity, but their doctrines are only thinly covered here and there by scientific shreds and patches. All the rest is naked exhibitionism. Professor Franz Boas thus sums up the latest scientific knowledge on the subject of race: "The present policies of the German government are based on the assumption that an 'Aryan' has certain biologically determined qualities that are entirely foreign to every 'non-Aryan' . . . These beliefs

<sup>8</sup> The Rabbis also divided mankind into two groups, but, significantly, the division was not on the basis of race but of religion—those who accepted monotheism and those who clung to polytheism and idolatry. Abraham, the founder of monotheism, was called Hebrew because "he was on one side (Eber-side) and the rest of the world was on the other side." (Ber. R. 42.13)

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

are based on a complete misunderstanding of what constitutes a race and of the way in which we arrive at the concept of a racial type . . . That unity of race which is the foundation of the policies of the German government does not exist . . . There is even less sense in the claim that physical, mental, or social characteristics are racially determined. The differences between individuals of the same race in regard to behavior are so great that all attempts to prove constant racial characteristics are no more than an expression of subjective impressions without the slightest attempt to prove their racial significance . . . Aryan is a linguistic term and has nothing to do with race . . . It is rash to maintain that any difference in physical build is inevitably connected with a difference in psychic life . . . Attempts have been made to correlate the mental behavior of man with his physical build, to find out, for instance, whether a long-headed, blond person will have reactions different from those of a round-headed, dark-skinned individual. All strictly scientific experiments of this nature prove that within the same social background such relations do not exist . . . No one has ever proved that a human being, through his descent from a certain group of people, must of necessity have certain mental characteristics. A nation is not to be defined by its descent, but by its language and customs. Otherwise, Germans,

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

Frenchmen and Italians would not be nationalities. Language and customs are determined far more by the environment in which the child grows than by its descent, because the physical attributes, so far as they have any influence at all, occur with extraordinary variety within every group.”<sup>4</sup>

There are no pure races in the world and there are no superior races. There are no races endowed by nature with superior chromosomes yielding superior qualities of mind or character. There are races more favored than others by circumstances, by environment, by geographic position, by the fertility of the soil or by the treasures underneath the soil. There are advanced races and backward races, but no superior races. There are differences between races, but no biologic gradations. If the Nordic races had possessed superior natural endowments, they would have evolved the first great civilizations of mankind instead of the last. “It is more proper,” states the famous anthropologist, Dr. Hrdlicka, “to speak of belated peoples than of naturally or irremediably inferiors.”<sup>5</sup>

The feeling of race superiority is cherished not alone by the aristocrat but by the plebian as well. It is *his* badge of aristocracy. It is an unearned increment which makes him feel good, for it auto-

<sup>4</sup> Franz Boas, “Aryans and non-Aryans” (Information and Service Association, n. d.), *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> See my *Religion in a Changing World* (New York, 1931), pp. 115 ff. See also Otto Klineberg, *Race Differences* (New York, 1935), pp. 341 ff; and Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (New York, 1934), pp. 233 ff.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

matically elevates him above other men who are actually his intellectual or moral superiors.

Furthermore, every great civilization, like every great discovery, invention or system of thought, is an amalgam, a configuration of other civilizations in a unique arrangement to which much else that is new and original is added. Great cultures are synthetic. They result from racial admixtures and from an integration of various cultural types. Professor Friedrich Hertz declares: "The allegation of the race theorists that crosses of different races lead to degeneracy is worthless for the mere reason that none of them sticks to a clear definition of what he really means by a 'different' race . . . We are never told whether perchance only black and white are to be considered as 'diverging' races, or also white 'Aryans' and white 'Semites'; or whether among the Aryans the Teutons are to be singled out as contrasted against the Slavs, or even whether also the Teutonic races, viz. the English, Germans, etc. are to be considered as racially different? . . . The assumption that race mixing as a rule must be accompanied by great disadvantage is contradicted frequently by calling attention to the fact that the great cultural centers are to be found just in such regions as are most liable to race mixing . . . Where different races meet on common ground a crossing of the different culture elements takes place, and cultural attainments increase on both sides . . . All nations of any im-

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

portance in history show a mixture of different races . . . In Europe in later times innumerable peoples and intellectual strains intermingled, and it would be quite hopeless to distinguish the separate parts the several races played in the make-up of these cultures. In most cases this would be as impossible as to find out from which river a particular wave in the ocean came.”<sup>6</sup>

History also shows that no race remains permanently dominant. No race retains a position of supremacy for more than a few centuries. Races are like individuals. They have their periods of infancy and early development. Then comes their short golden age of maturity, when they fashion out of the genius which is theirs those gifts which become their legacies to mankind. And then the reaction sets in—intellectual and spiritual exhaustion. The race goes to seed. Five hundred or even a thousand years may elapse before the race will experience a new ferment and stir, before it will begin to forge its way anew to another cycle of creative life.

The mere fact, however, that racism has no foundation in science or logic, does not dispose of it by any means. It does not follow that because a thing is not so, it cannot and does not exercise a profound influence on human life. Witchcraft, magic, astrology and many other persistent forms

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Hertz, *Race and Civilization* (New York, 1928), pp. 152-5.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

of human superstitions affected the social and intellectual life of man far more seriously than some truly scientific doctrines. It is no exaggeration to say that the nonexistent but quite lively and omnipresent Devil exercised a far greater influence on the lives of common folk through the ages than Plato or Moses.

There is far more race idolatry in the world today than ever before in the history of mankind. There was no color line, to speak of, in antiquity. The Greeks were conscious of their cultural superiority, but they did not attribute it to biology. They claimed excellence on the basis of their civilization, not their blood. The early city-states may have had a strong racial basis because of their close-knit family composition. But as Greece became national in character and reached out beyond the narrow confines of the city-state, it lost its racial emphasis. By the fifth century before the common era, Hellenism was no longer a character of race, but a quality of culture. It did not resist a stranger because he was of another blood.

The Romans evolved into splendid racial cosmopolites. By the time of Caracalla, Roman citizenship was extended to the members of every racial and national group within the far-flung Roman Empire. And prior to that time no people in all the provinces of Rome was discriminated against because of race.

The Jew was proud not of his race but of his

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

religion. The proselyte to the faith was welcomed into the total life of the race. He became an integral part of Israel, possessed of the same rights as the inborn. Some of the greatest figures in Jewish history were the descendants of proselytes. There are echoes in the Bible of historic animosities directed against certain neighboring tribes and peoples, but these animosities were based not on ethnological grounds, but on painful historic experiences. They were the scars of memory.

The Jews regarded themselves as the chosen people not because of their racial qualities, but because of having been selected to be the servants of God to carry his moral law to the world. They looked upon themselves as a covenanted people, a kingdom, not of supermen, but of priests. This covenant with God was an act of will on both sides, a matter not of the fatalism of blood but of choice. Admission into this covenant was open to all men of all races at all times, also as a matter of choice. The prophets of Israel constantly reminded the Jews of the nonracial character of their especial relationship to Yahweh: "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me O children of Israel?" said the Lord. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt and the Philistines from Captor, and Aram from Kir?" (Amos 9:7)

The Jews regarded themselves as the enlisted army of the Lord. They therefore submitted to an especially rigorous discipline of laws to insure their

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

survival, as well as the effective prosecution of their mission. Their mission was not conquest or racial mastery or territorial "Lebensraum," but to be a "light unto the Gentiles." These laws were therefore not binding upon the non-Jews. The latter could acquire full merit and in all things be the equal of the most pious Jews simply by obeying, not the elaborate Mosaic code of laws, but the few elementary and universal laws of mankind—the so-called Seven Laws of the Noachidae. The gates of Paradise would be open to the righteous among the Gentiles, declared the Rabbis, equally with the righteous among the Jews who faithfully obeyed all the six hundred and thirteen positive and negative commandments.

Israel's God was the God of all nations. Israel's sole prerogative lay in carrying on an arduous and self-sacrificing moral and religious leadership. When Israel no longer wished to bear the burden of religious leadership, the covenant was broken and Israel knew itself to be rejected of God.

The attitude of the Jew to intermarriage was not based on the fear lest the resultant racial admixture would produce an inferior type—less gifted artists or scientists or musicians. There was but one reason throughout the ages: "Lest he will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods." Ezra's excessively drastic measures to save the war-shattered Judean com-

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES .

munity from religious assimilation were similarly motivated.

In its highest ethical ranges the law of Israel drew no line of distinction between native-born and foreigner. "And the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you. And thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Lev. 19:34) When the central shrine of Israel was dedicated in Jerusalem, King Solomon in his dedicatory prayer prayed to God: "Moreover concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country . . . when he shall come and pray towards this house: Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for." (I Kings 8:41-43)

There is no race literature in Israel and no Nuremberg laws. No man is regarded as "sub-human." The vast literature of Israel is singularly free from speculation touching the relative merits of the various blood streams of mankind—a present-day obsession of so many German pundits. No academies for the study of race were founded by Israel to prove the Jews' racial superiority and, by implication, the racial inferiority of all other peoples. Israel did establish numerous academies in all parts of the world, and did create a vast literature to prove the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man . . .

Christianity took over the prophetic, universal-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

istic principles of Judaism, emphasized them, enlarged upon them, and carried them to the far corners of the earth. With Paul, the concept of Israel ceased to be physical and became spiritual. The covenant which was made with Abraham was intended not necessarily for his physical but for his spiritual descendants who were not all Hebrews. "For they are not all Israel which are of Israel." The real descendants of Abraham are the men of faith. Through faith in Jesus all the heathen peoples of the earth may enter the covenants of Abraham, become his true descendants, and share in his blessings. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." The belief that the people of Israel, as such—the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—constitute, on the basis of an ancient covenant, "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," to which all Jews automatically belong by virtue of their birth, and into which members of other nations and races may be naturalized only through proselytism is here rejected, and in its place is put the belief in a free, spontaneous, universal spiritual fellowship, wherein no group possesses any initial favored position, and wherein the observance of the Mosaic law imparts no special distinction or virtue.

The organic racial oneness of the whole human

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

family is most clearly and forcibly enunciated by Paul to the Athenians: "The God that made the world and all nations therein, He being Lord of heaven and earth . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." (Acts 17:24-26) There is also his magnificent summary: "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous unto all that call upon Him." (Rom. 10:12) Christianity taught the love of man—never the glory of race.

It is, therefore, no accident that the Nazi racists have been led by the logic of their position to repudiate both the Old and the New Testaments, and are seeking to re-enthrone the tribal gods of heathen Germany. They wish to forsake Jesus for Wotan. "Can Jesus help us," they cry, "who was himself a Jew?" . . .

The record of Islam on the score of race tolerance is perhaps the noblest of all. All converts to the faith of Islam were, and to this day are, received as social equals, unlike the color bar which still separates the white Christian from the native Christian in the colonies, and which still calls for separate white and colored Christian churches in many parts of the world, including our own. The spirit of Islam tolerates no distinction of race or color.

Nor does Buddhism, which proclaimed the equality of all castes and opened the road to Nir-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

vana to the lowest member of the eternally damned Sudra caste as to the twice-born Aryan priests, warriors and commoners. Everybody was held equal in the doctrine and discipline of the Buddha. The caste system, which Hinduism sanctioned and which was intended to perpetuate the authority of the Aryan conquerors over the non-Aryan aborigines of India, and also to insure priority to the Brahmins among the Aryans, was rejected by the Buddha. "Not by birth," he declared, "does one become an outcaste, not by birth does one become a Brahmin; by *deeds* one becomes an outcaste, by *deeds* one becomes a Brahmin."

The Middle Ages knew very little of the racial chauvinism which is so rampant in our day. There was no talk of race purity in the Middle Ages. The Catholic Church, true to the original inspiration of its faith, was free from race intolerance. It was a force uniting men athwart all racial and cultural barriers. To be sure, it was not tolerant in all things. It recognized other sharp dividing lines —none, however, which could not be obliterated by conversion or by the abjuration of heretical doctrines. It did not recognize any insurmountable race barriers.

It was with the rise of modern nationalism, of state sovereignties and of colonial imperialism and the consequent exploitation of the backward races, that the necessity arose for rationalizing nationalist claims and for finding ideological justifica-

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

tions for the exploitation of native peoples in colonial empires. This soon appeared in the form of pseudo-scientific theories of race superiority. These theories gained prestige and popularity as the European nations proceeded to conquer, subject and despoil backward peoples.

Touching the exploitation of the race motif in Nazi Germany, Hermann Rauschning declares:

"The doctrine of race, as yet developed only in regard to Jewry, offers inexhaustible opportunities of domination and of providing an ideological basis for a realist will to power in colonial territory. Only on the basis of the doctrine of race can democratic ideas be ideologically combated, only this basis can provide the strength of will, the ruthlessness, and freedom from all 'humanitarian folly,' necessary for the control of great territories and the defense of the privileged position of the white race in the world. The new political doctrine facilitates, so to speak, the work of ruling. The racial doctrine, the doctrine of the inequality of men and races, sweeps away all the sentiment acquired under the burden of centuries by so reflective and sensitive a race of rulers, rather feminine in their sensibility, as the Anglo-Saxons. If they still like to consider it their special mission to bear the 'white man's burden,' nothing is better calculated to facilitate their task than the new racial doctrine, the new rulership of the dynamic nations.

"It would be instructive to regard the persistent

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

policy of anti-Semitism from the point of view of this idea of a doctrine of rulership. We must distinguish between a popular conception for the masses and a special interpretation for the élite. Among the S. S. and the leaders of the S. A., anti-Semitism is deliberately regarded as a 'school of rulership.' The Jew is the 'colored man,' the déclassé of Europe, the politically disfranchised 'sub-man.' A humane attitude toward him is the sign of unfitness to rule. For this reason insensitivity and absolute cruelty are deliberately practiced. Soft-heartedness has to be driven out and brutally provided, so to speak, with a good conscience."<sup>7</sup>

Modern nationalism has fallen under the blight of race idolatry, particularly among a people like the Germans who are politically provincial and among whom national unity is a quite recent achievement, and hence still a matter for Hallelujah. The novel doctrine is loudly proclaimed that a nation must be racially homogeneous, and every national within the state who cannot trace his ancestry back to the racial stock of the majority is an alien and an intruder.

Racism which thus runs counter to the progressive historic trend, as revealed in Judaism, Hellenism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, the Medieval Church, and in the regnant ideals of the American and French Revolutions, and which has no basis

<sup>7</sup> *The Revolution of Nihilism* (New York, 1939), p. 207.

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

in science, is sweeping over our world today, and great and impious crimes are being committed in its name.

## II

Why is the tide of racism and anti-Semitism rising in our country and in the world at the present time? What has happened? The answer is not far to seek. The tide is rising because there are powerful agencies which are intent upon making it rise. Of these, the most powerful agency in the world today is the Nazi regime in Germany. It has fed race hatred throughout the world ever since it came into power. Nazism is a political creed out to conquer the world. It is missionary. It is not content to stay confined within the limits of the land of its origin. It regards itself as a crusading movement for a new order to supplant the present order of society. It seeks to destroy the present culture of the Western World. The Nazis have not been reticent about defining the nature of their crusade. The order of things which has prevailed in the Western World ever since the American and French Revolutions is decadent. It must be destroyed. They are out to destroy it. Racial inequality is one of the chief characteristics of the new social order which they hope to establish on the ruins of the old whose foundations were liberty, fraternity and equality.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

In the hands of the Nazis, racism has also become a major technique of imperial expansionism. By means of it they hope to create a mood of crisis and conflict within those countries which they have marked out for conquest, and so to undermine their powers of resistance. By disrupting the internal spiritual unity of a nation they prepare it for easier subjugation. Anti-Semitism has thus become part of the strategy of Total War.

Until recent years, the problem of anti-Semitism was not a serious one in the United States. Some religious or racial prejudice always existed and it was characterized by local fluctuations of varied intensity, but it was never serious enough to disturb the life of the nation, and to arouse national apprehensions. That it has become serious in recent years is due not to the fact that the people of the United States have suddenly come to a realization that the Jews of America constitute a menace. It is due solely to the fact that the ever-widening circles of politically-motivated anti-Jewish propaganda, originating in Nazi Germany, have finally reached our shores. The Nazi government is stimulating and directing it here as it is doing in other parts of the world. Nazi agents are actively disseminating it here and native Americans of Nazi sympathies are their eager co-workers. Thus what had been, until recently, only a sporadic phenomenon has been fanned into a move-

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

ment, which is directed from abroad and supported by reactionaries at home.

Reactionaries in this country are eager to associate the Jew with all the political and economic measures which they dislike, whether it be the New Deal, labor legislation, social security, the C.I.O., Socialism or Communism. The equation Jew=Communism, or Communism=Jew, served the purposes of the Nazis in Germany most admirably. By means of it they destroyed the German Republic. Since the Stalin-Hitler Pact, they have abandoned it, for it is no longer good policy to attack Communism. Hitler has accordingly ceased to denounce Jewish Bolshevism. He finds it now expedient to denounce democratic plutocracy. And in democratic plutocracy Hitler again finds the ever-present and accommodating Jew. Do not the Jews control England as they do or did Bolshevik Russia? . . . Nazism is now forced to spear and display the socialistic morsel in the *pot pourri* called National Socialism. The new Nazi party line, which no longer equates Jews with Communism, has, however, not yet reached the United States. Here the Jew-Communist equation is still serviceable for propaganda purposes and it is still the battle-cry of Nazi agents, and of their lay and clerical collaborators.

Why did the Nazis in the earlier stages identify Communism with the Jew? To be sure there were Jews among the Communists in Germany and in

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

Russia. Some of them were in prominent positions. They were not nearly as numerous as the Nazi propagandists would have one believe, and one must not forget that there were Jews in large numbers and in prominent positions in all the anti-Bolshevist parties in Germany and in Russia. Why then did the Nazis identify all Jews with Communism, and all Communism with the Jew? For the same reason that sixty years prior to their time, Bismarck had identified all the liberal movements of *his* day with the Jews. For the same reason that the Dominicans and the defenders of a crumbling scholasticism attempted to discredit Humanism and the New Learning in pre-Reformation Germany by branding them as Jewish, and by inaugurating bitter attacks upon the Jews and their literature, a conspiracy which the brilliant authors of *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum* cunningly exposed.

The guiding principle is the same:—inodiate a cause by tagging on to it an unattractive label! It is very serviceable to pin an existing historic prejudice on your opponent. By branding your opponent's cause as Jewish, you give it an unpopular and suspect origin. It looms up as something alien. You are saved the trouble of refuting your opponent's position logically. You score an initial victory of great moment. Bismarck, after he turned reactionary, attacked liberalism by identifying it with the Jews. He stimulated a powerful

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

anti-Semitic movement in Germany which produced a voluminous anti-Semitic literature. The same tactics were employed by the Nazis years later to discredit the liberal and radical movements in post-war Germany.

In post-war Germany there were millions of men whose conditions were intolerable, and who were turning to Socialism and Communism. In the last free elections in Germany there were over seven million votes cast for the Socialist ticket, and some six million for the Communist ticket. The problem which confronted the frightened industrial, military and Junker classes of Germany was how to check this stampede toward radicalism, and how to deflect the resentment of the masses away from themselves. The problem, too, was how to assuage the sense of national hurt and humiliation induced by the defeat in the war which they caused. Where could they find a visible scapegoat upon whose back all the sins, failures and miseries of the German nation could be put? Such a scapegoat was not difficult to find. A small, defenseless minority, the Jews, against whom there already existed a none-too-latent historic prejudice, was fortunately available. From there on it was simple. It was the Jews who stabbed Germany in the back! The German army was never really defeated! Why did the Jews stab Germany in the back? Because the Jews wish to dominate the world, to destroy one Christian nation after another, and upon their ruins to

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

raise themselves to world dominion. But where is the proof? Why, it is here, in a book—*The Elders of Zion!* This book reveals the whole plot. That the book is an acknowledged forgery does not matter. If a lie serves a useful purpose, it must be regarded as the truth. This book was circulated by the millions of copies in Germany in the years following the World War. How does the Jew go about destroying one Christian country after another? He has a very cunning way of doing it. He adopts two seemingly contradictory devices. One is capitalism and the other is Communism. These are the converging pincers in the Jew's grand strategy. The capitalism of which you, Christian workingmen and middle-class folk of Germany, justly complain, is not the true capitalism. There are two kinds of capitalism: the good, creative, Christian capitalism, and the bad, destructive Jewish capitalism. What you should attack is not the good Christian capitalism, but the bad Jewish capitalism. Also, there is a good socialism and a bad socialism. When you vote for the Social Democrats you are being beguiled by the evil, international, Jewish Socialism which is anti-German and unpatriotic. So are your labor unions which are dominated by Jews, and so is your liberal press which is controlled by Jews. The only good Socialism is National Socialism. In this wise was the economic struggle deftly transferred to another terrain. The struggle was no longer one between

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

progress and reaction, between liberalism and feudalism. The struggle was now between the embattled Aryan and the menacing Jew, between patriotism and alienism, between Berlin and Jerusalem . . .

This propaganda, intense and skillful, and heavily financed by great industrialists—some of whom have since been disillusioned—went on for years, and it succeeded in undermining the peoples' faith in democracy and their free institutions. Anti-Semitism was thus exploited, in a political and economic struggle, to defeat progress and to save reaction.

Minorities have been used for such purposes throughout the ages. The great Church Father Tertullian, recalls the experiences of the Christian minority in ancient Rome: "If the Tiber rose to the walls of the city, if the inundation of the Nile failed to give the fields enough water, if the heavens did not send rain, if an earthquake occurred, if famine threatened, if pestilence raged, the cry resounded: 'Throw the Christians to the lions!'"

Unless these classic tactics are firmly grasped, Americans will not appreciate what is behind the growing anti-Semitic movement in the United States.

Anti-Semitism today is a powerful, perhaps the most powerful, weapon in the hands of economic reaction. It is being increasingly used by all its un-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

scrupulous lackeys and henchmen. It has become the accepted technique.

Anti-Semitism is being stimulated in the United States in order to confound our national life, disrupt its unity, and weaken it. This will pave the way for an ultimate Fascist triumph. The propaganda device is quite simple: Proclaim from the housetops: " 'The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!' You are being betrayed! The American people is being sold down the river! The international bankers [and by now this term has been made synonymous with *Jewish* bankers; Christian international bankers have somehow disappeared] are driving Americans into war, hoping to profit from the sale of munitions, and hoping also to avenge themselves on their enemies, the Nazis. The Jews are betraying the United States. The Jews were responsible for the last depression and for all past and present economic ills. You, the American people, are not being told the truth, because your press is controlled by the Jews. So are your movies and your radio. Your government cannot help you because your government, too, is in the hands of Jews, from the President down . . . The machinery of democracy is no longer capable of saving the American people. If you wish to be saved you must yield all power, temporarily, of course, to us, your saviors, who will rescue you from this dire plot. When the job is done, all your liberties will, of course, be restored to you, and

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

you will live happily ever after . . . ." The same tactics which put the Nazis into power in Germany are being employed in this country on an increasingly large scale. And there are Thyssens here in the United States, as there were in Germany who, rather than see their economic privileges undermined, would welcome the destruction of our free democratic institutions. Some of these American Thyssens and Fascist fellow-travelers have already been decorated by the Nazis . . .

Anti-Semitism is thus today no longer the slightly embarrassing thing that it was in the past —something to be counteracted by easygoing, good-will movements. It is a far more sinister thing. It is a powerful and dangerously imminent threat to American democracy. It is the same sinister force which destroyed one free country after another in Europe. Wherever Fascism is on the march, anti-Semitism is its vanguard. The shock troops of Fascism are always anti-Semites. By that sign ye shall know them!

The answer to the question "Can the rising tide of race prejudice be stemmed?" depends, therefore, upon how long the Nazi regime will last. There will be no abatement in race prejudices until the Nazis are defeated or until they themselves either grow weary of it or find the preaching of racism no longer serviceable. The Nazis have a way of abandoning major articles of their creed when they are no longer serviceable. They abandoned anti-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

Communism as soon as the Hitler-Stalin pact made it decidedly *de trop*. It is interesting also to note that ever since the conquest of Czechoslovakia, the first non-Germanic state which the Nazis absorbed, they have talked less and less of race as the sole basis of the state. But until defeat overtakes them, or until they themselves abandon racism, Nazi propaganda, saturated as it is with the bitterest race hate, will continue to penetrate this country and every free country, and, like their *panzer* columns, to fan out and spread.

What can be done to counteract it? There still remains, of course, the old-fashioned but very dependable method of democratic education. Education still remains the strongest bulwark of a free people. The American people should be educated in the techniques of modern propaganda which have been so skillfully elaborated in our day. Courses in the detection of, and the prophylaxis against, false propaganda of all kinds, and particularly race propaganda, should be introduced into the curricula of all our high school and colleges. Our people should be made aware of the methods which are being employed and the true character of the organizations and governments which employ them. They should be informed as to how racial and religious antagonisms are aroused and exploited, in order to divide a people, confuse its counsels, and undermine its national resistance to aggression.

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

We have long assumed that education in democracy will somehow take care of itself, as an unconscious by-product of our day-by-day living. This is no longer true. Democracy is under fire today and on the defensive. Both its theoretic soundness and its practical utility have been challenged. Many people have rejected it as antiquated, inefficient and distinctly harmful. Antiliberalism and antidemocracy have today a passionate and heroic zeal behind them. Totalitarianism has millions of enthusiastic devotees in all parts of the world. Quite deliberately and specifically we must begin to educate our people anew, and especially our youth, in the principles, practices, advantages and obligations of the democratic way of life.

Propaganda, ever since the last World War, has developed into a new science, a Voodoo science, if you will, but still a science. It is no longer left to chance. It has been very carefully elaborated, and those who wish to employ it for their special interests know exactly how to compound the ingredients of that intoxicating cup by which the masses are made drunk and inflamed so as to be pushed the more easily in the direction in which the interested parties want them to move. "The driving power of great social change," declared Hitler, "is not insight but hysteria." If you wish to bring about a social revolution, do not rely upon the slow processes of education and evolution. Rely upon hysteria! Inflame the passions of

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

people, arouse them to a high pitch of passion, fear, or anger, and then you can do with them whatever you wish. By the time they recover from the fumes of your propaganda, they will be faced by your machine guns, if you are clever . . .

Illiteracy and ignorance used to be the greatest foes of human progress. They are no longer. Mankind has found ways of stamping out illiteracy in very quick order. The real foe of human progress today is the far more subtle and insidious one called propaganda, which employs a bastard literacy, and a venal and corrupt educational process as an important part of its technique. The mind of man is not kept uninformed but misinformed.

Democracy, generally, should put on its armor and cease to be naive, trusting and doctrinaire. The forces hostile to our way of life and to our free institutions should be continuously exposed. No democracy is immune, as long as it is a democracy, from anti-democratic propaganda, either native or foreign. Forces opposed to democracy will use the very apparatus of democracy, as well as its abundant tolerance, to destroy it. In the face of this, democracy must not remain complacent. It must aggressively and relentlessly expose and harass every form of propaganda which is hostile to our basic conceptions of life and government. The agents of foreign dictatorships and their native-born kinsmen must be kept under constant surveillance. Those who wish to destroy free Amer-

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

ica should not be permitted the glamour of putting their followers in uniform or of parading our public thoroughfares.

But, no hysteria! No witch-hunting! No mass stampede away from the Bill of Rights and the constitutional guarantees of a free people. We should not in our great concern and impatience, permit ourselves to resort to extralegal and unconstitutional methods to obtain even worthy and desirable objectives. To destroy liberty in an effort to preserve it is the height of folly. The detection, arrest and punishment of spies, saboteurs, and plotters against our domestic peace and security should be left to our legally constituted authorities who are charged with the enforcement of our laws and the defense of our free institutions.

Laws should be enacted—if they do not already exist—against the public vilification of any race or religion, and against the incitement of people against any race or religion. The most virile and businesslike democracy of all—Switzerland—has had such laws for some time. France found it necessary to enact them, but, unfortunately, too late!

Increased opportunities for contact between all racial and religious groups in America for the discussion of their common problems, and for a survey of all areas of friction are highly desirable. It is a sure way to “plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America”—Walt Whitman’s dream.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

The times call for frank and honest self-criticism on the part of all, Jews and non-Jews alike, and particularly on the part of those who constitute the majority; for after all, the solution of anti-Semitism lies with them. It would be very helpful if each group would begin to beat its own breast, instead of beating its neighbor's breast, and would confess "mea culpa" . . .

There was a race problem in the United States long before the Nazis kindled the Jewish race problem. There was a negro problem, and there is a negro problem in this country, American-made—not imported. To this day millions of citizens of the United States live and are tolerated only as members of an inferior race. They are segregated in many parts of this country, as to schools, churches, residential districts, hospitals, travel, and places of amusement. Millions of these fellow citizens are economically handicapped because of race. They find it hard to get employment in skilled trades. By and large, they are restricted to the lower strata of our industrial life, to jobs which the white man does not want. In many instances they are denied the right to equal wages for equal work. In some parts of the country, and not merely in the South, they are denied the right to join labor unions. They are curbed in the exercise of their franchise as regards voting and holding office. They are denied equal opportunities in education. There are few recreational facilities available for

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

their young people. Many of them are herded into miserable slums, and these slums are not restricted to the South. Since 1915, over one million negroes migrated to the North and for at least 50% of them living conditions are below the minimum standard of decent human habitations. They are subjected sporadically to mob violence, and to lynching; and a Federal law intended to curb mob violence was filibustered for forty-seven days in the Senate of the United States as recently as two years ago. As a result, this race which, given opportunities, has evidenced remarkable gifts in many fields, is disproportionately subjected to poverty, ignorance, disease, and vice.

Here is a native American race problem, the kind of problem which the Nazis have only recently begun to create in Germany, and this problem is allowed to exist within the framework of democracy. Here is a test of our sincerity. We all recognize that this problem is a hard, indurate, and time-encrusted one. But it is not an insoluble one. With the right kind of attitudes on the part of the white man—the majority group—a solution can be approximated—given patience, courage and vision on both sides. What the problem calls for above all else is a resolute will to be fair and just, and a determination to attempt to solve it not in the gross but in the detail, not in the abstract, but in the concrete.

What is needed most in order to stem the rising

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

tide of race prejudice which will disfigure our common life is to discipline ourselves to treat men as *individuals*. It is not an easy thing to do, but we are not concerned here with easy problems or with easy solutions. The chief characteristic of the democratic dogma is the concept of the free human being and his inalienable private rights. Before the rise of democracy in Western Europe, before the Rights of Man were proclaimed, individuals were treated legally, socially, and economically not in relation to themselves but within the framework of an associated life in relation to the *group* to which they belonged—nobleman, cleric, military, peasant. It was a hierarchic, a feudal arrangement of social life. It was from a long experience with that kind of social organization that we have carried over the practice of judging men collectively, within fixed molds. Democracy rediscovered the human being, the individual who derived from his Creator—not from society or from his class—certain fundamental rights which were accordingly his inalienably. He is entrenched in his own rights. He is to be judged on the basis of his own worth, merit and ability. He is not to be handicapped or advantaged by any fortuitous circumstance of class, creed or color. The very genius of democracy is to treat man on the basis of his inherent humanity, and his inalienable human rights.

One's self I sing, a simple separate person,  
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word *En-Masse*.

## III

The Jews have suffered at the hands both of their friends and their enemies. Both fashioned them into a myth. Both refused to see them for what they are—a people like any other people, not a communion made up exclusively of saints or sinners, but one which includes saints and sinners, and quite a number of just ordinary, common folk. Like every other people, Jews do not act as a unit. They are divided along numerous economic, social, political, religious and cultural lines. They possess relatively little central organization and authority. They are divided religiously—not quite as much as the Christian group, but still divided. There are Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews, and quite a number of non-religious and atheistic Jews. There is no typical Jew. There is no Jewish type as regards looks or manners. There are Jews who are blond and tall, and those who are short and dark, Jews with blue eyes and those with brown eyes. Not all Jews are businessmen or professional men or intellectuals, or radicals, or rich. We have our geniuses and our morons. A closer acquaintance with the people would help to remove the mythological nimbus which unfortunately still hovers about the Jew. It would help to dissipate some of the wild-eyed generalizations about him.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

There is nothing strange about the fact that Jews have been persecuted for so long and so universally. To some this fact suggests an inherent sinister quality in the Jews themselves provoking widespread and sustained persecution. The whole world cannot be wrong, it is argued. Therefore, there must be something wrong with the Jews themselves.

What is actually wrong with the Jew is that he is everywhere a minority. Minorities are always and everywhere in disfavor. Wherever Protestants were a minority in Catholic lands they were persecuted and hated, and frequently slain. Franco's Spain has no room for Protestants. Wherever Catholics were in a minority in Protestant lands they were similarly persecuted. Wherever Christians were a minority in non-Christian lands, they were persecuted. The misfortune of the Jew has been that nowhere in the world is he a majority. Nowhere does he have a homeland. This is the whole story. The rest is venal metaphysical vaporing.

Individuals belonging to a minority group are almost always judged in relation to their group, and almost always in relation to the most censurable and least desirable within that group. As Mr. Riah remarked in *Our Mutual Friend*: "Men find the bad among us easily enough. They take the worst of us as samples of the best; they take the

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

lowest of us as presentations of the highest; and they say 'All Jews are alike.' "

A sinister aura also hovers about the Jew because he is international. The International Jew! There, indeed, is a bogey with which to frighten men. In the Middle Ages and up to the last few generations, Jews were indeed far more widely scattered over the face of the earth than any other people. This is not the case today. Englishmen, Germans, Italians and other peoples are today as widely scattered over the face of the earth as are the Jews. They are found in large numbers on every continent and in nigh every land. They are as international as the Jew! There is but one difference—and it is decisive. These other peoples have a *national homeland from which they came*. That gives them status wherever they go. The Jews possess no such national home. They are therefore regarded as wandering from one homelessness to another. Zionism aims to put an end to this anomalous position of the Jews, to normalize the position of the Jewish people in the world by giving it political status through a national homeland.

There do exist, of course, problems of adjustment between Jew and non-Jew. There always have been and there always will be, as long as separate racial and cultural groups exist side by side in the world. We, in the United States, are a composite people. Our citizens have come from all

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

parts of the world, from different backgrounds, and have brought with them different traditions and ways of life. Some friction at first is inevitable. Between Jew and non-Jew there is the additional difficulty of an age-old religious antagonism, a millennial theological struggle which has embittered their relationship. Theological antipathies are not to be entirely ignored even today. It is interesting to note that heretofore the sharp outbreaks of intolerance in this country were not between Jews and non-Jews, but between Catholics and Protestants. In the early decades of the last century there was a strong anti-Catholic political movement in the United States: The Know-Nothing Party was an American party motivated by anti-Catholicism, as well as by strong anti-Irish and anti-German sentiments. In some of the larger cities of the East, Catholic Churches and monasteries were attacked and burnt in an outbreak of religious bigotry. However, these outbreaks were of short duration. America does not wish to create minority problems. It has had one—the Negro problem—and it has proved a very tragic one. It is quite simple to create a minority problem. It is very hard to solve it. Europe must think from one bloody war to another about the rights of minority groups. America, fortunately, can think about the rights of man.

A closer acquaintance with the real and not the mythological Jew will simplify the problem of

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

adjustment. This is not to suggest that there are no Jews who cause active dislike and resentment. Jews have no monopoly either of the virtues or the vices. The Jews themselves are the first to acknowledge it. No people has been or is today as self-critical as the Jews. The Bible is the most candid and self-accusing national literature in the world. The prophets constantly castigated their race not because their race was morally inferior to other races, but because their standards were higher. That tradition of self-criticism has survived to this day.

But basically it is not the faults of the Jews which cause active anti-Semitism. Prof. Valentin correctly states: "For it is not the Jews who are hated but an imaginary image of them, which is confounded with the reality, and the Jews' actual 'faults' play a very unimportant part in the matter . . . In fact, it is not at all certain that Anti-semitism would be weakened to any extent if the Jews were to consist exclusively of angels in human form."<sup>8</sup> From a reading of anti-Semitic literature it is apparent that it is not the faults of the Jews which provoke the bitterest onslaughts, but their virtues! It is the successful men of Israel in every field of human endeavor who provoke the most savage attacks. It is the Jews who are the intelligent, energetic and successful men, and those

<sup>8</sup> Hugo Valentin, *Antisemitism* (London, 1936), p. 305.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

who occupy prominent positions in the arts and sciences, in government and industry, who outrage the anti-Semite—not the common-run-of-the-mine Jews or those who are dolts, criminals and law-breakers. The menace of the Jew is graded according to his social influence. If all the Jews were beggars or nondescripts, there would be no anti-Semitism in the world today.

There are certain irritant factors in their status which Jews are quick to recognize. There is the lack of rationalization in their economic setup. Jews are crowded into relatively few professions and callings. Their economic position does not rest upon a large farming or industrial population. This is a serious problem, the source of which is historical, not racial. The Dutch people pride themselves upon being predominantly a nation of merchants. Jews are expected to apologize for it. Some pundits have tried to discover some recondite and none-too-complimentary race-psychology to account for the fact that so many Jews are traders and merchants. The truth of the matter is that the Jewish people originally was an agricultural people and was little given to commerce or trade. The trader in ancient Palestine was the Canaanite. Most of the laws of the Bible envision an agricultural community. Most Biblical festivals celebrate the cycles of nature and are linked with the soil. For centuries after their dispersion the Jews continued as an agricultural people. What Jews can

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

do even today, after centuries of estrangement from the soil, in the field of colonization and farming is attested by the remarkable pioneering work which they have carried on in recent years in the barren, neglected and malaria-ridden land of Palestine. In a few short years the Jews turned that wilderness into a garden of God, and made Palestine the most fruitful as well as the most progressive country in the Near East. The testimony of the expert agriculturist, Dr. W. C. Lowdermilk, will be recalled: "A little more than fifty years ago, Jewish colonists undertook a formidable task to redeem this old land, and have carried out to date one of the most remarkable works of the restoration and reclamation of wasted land that I have seen in three continents."

It was only as the result of historic factors having to do with a universal religious intolerance which denied the Jew the right to own land, and which drove him into a few narrow and shabby economic activities that his economic life in the Middle Ages became so constricted and ill-balanced. The cure for this lies not in increasing economic discrimination against the Jew which will still further aggravate the situation, but in helping Jewish leaders to plan an intelligent program of economic reorientation for Jewish youth.

Here, again, the solution lies largely with the non-Jew. Jews are being discriminated against on a large scale in many fields of economic activity

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

in this country. A young Jew finds it progressively more difficult, in spite of adequate equipment and qualifications, to procure employment and to earn a living. Avowals of good-will on all sides cannot refute the clear evidence before the eyes of the young Jew that his country is rejecting him because he is a Jew, and that it is denying him the right to earn a living because of his race or religion. If some non-Jews are concerned about the number of Jews who are found in the ranks of the radical movements in the United States, let them look for the reason not in any imaginary race psychology, or any original racial cantankerousness, but in the practical everyday struggle for existence which has become desperate for many young Jewish men and women. Would not a non-Jewish youth, prepared for an occupation or a profession, and equipped with the necessary ability and qualifications, upon learning that all doors were closed to him because of his race or religion, be moved to denounce a system which tolerated that discrimination, and would he not resolve, if he be a man of spirit, to fight for a different kind of world in which a human being will have a chance to work and live?

There are large industries in the United States, employing hundreds of thousands of men, which have a standing rule: "Jews need not apply." Some employers, when confronted with this fact, attempt to rationalize their attitude by declaring

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

that the Jew is too ambitious—as if ambition had suddenly become a vice in our economic system. American industrial and business men who are anxious to conserve the economic system under which they live ought not to build up powerful centers of resistance and resentment by denying men their right to earn a living because of their race or creed.

The Jew has been prominent in many liberal and progressive movements in the last one hundred and fifty years. This has frequently evoked resentment from conservative groups. People who suffer from political and social disabilities naturally crave for a change to improve their lot. The Jews of Russia quite naturally hoped for the overthrow of the Czar, for that alone could release them from the severe restrictions under which they lived. If a group is suppressed for long, some of its members will become extreme in the content of their thinking. In the Jewish tradition there has always been a powerful prophetic motif, a challenge to struggle for a better social order, for greater economic justice. Although not all Jews, of course, have been motivated by it, it has nevertheless inspired many among our people, and among them our best and choicest spirits, to passionate aspirations in the fields of social reconstruction. This has aroused bitter antagonisms. We regret these antagonisms, but we are rather proud of their cause. And we cherish the hope that

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

the present persecutions of our people in Europe will not frighten nor discourage our spirited sons and daughters from continuing their quest and struggle for the Kingdom. It is better to die fighting for a noble cause than to submit ignobly to conditions of wrong and injustice.

A closer understanding of what *Judaism* is will also help to dissipate age-old prejudices. Judaism is not an historic foil for Christianity. It existed long before Christianity. It has continued vigorously and has retained its essential spiritual identity since the rise of Christianity. It is one of the great religions of mankind. It is not necessary to play off Christianity against Judaism, as if they represented two opposite schools of religious thought. They do not. In many ways they overlap and supplement each other. One derives from the other. On basic ethical concepts they are not sharply antagonistic, and it is not necessary to continue the theological fiction that Christianity began where Judaism left off, or that Judaism ceased to grow and develop as a living religion with the advent of Christianity, or that Jews fulfill their destiny only as theologic quarry for zealous Christian missionaries. In fact the whole competitive attitude between these two great religions might well be dispensed with without either one suffering in consequence.

Equally so, it is important for the Jew to learn to understand the Christian and Christianity

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

better. Ignorance on the part of the Jew concerning them is quite extensive. The bitter memories, accumulated from a sad millennial experience in the ghettos—not to speak of the recent horrors in Christian Nazified Europe—have left a deposit of suspicion and distrust in the minds of many Jews. This makes them at times very prone to magnify, to misinterpret, to distort, to detect insult or discrimination where none is intended. It is important for the Jew to understand better the Christian religion and the Christian tradition. The Jew who will become better acquainted with Christianity will not become less Jewish, nor will the Christian become less Christian because of a closer acquaintance with Judaism.

Another persistent irritant is the manner in which the Christ story is taught to Christian children in many Christian schools. Many a child grows up carrying with him a hateful picture of the Jew based on what he learned in his Sunday school about the Jew as the Christ-killer, and therefore as the eternal enemy of society. The Christian epic can be told with understanding and sympathy in a manner which will do no harm to good will and to Christian-Jewish relationships. The story of Jesus as a great Jew who lived long ago and taught great ethical truths and suffered for them in the same way as every great man suffers at the hands of his people, can be told without arousing hatred for the people from whose midst Jesus

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

came. It is gratifying to note a decided trend in this direction among liberal Christian educators. It is also gratifying to note the tendency among Jews to treat of the life and teachings of Jesus with increased sympathy and understanding. It is only within the last generation that great Jewish scholars and writers—a Klausner or a Sholem Asch—have come to treat of the life and character of the founder of Christianity, the great mystic and inspired Jewish teacher of Galilee, with proper insight and historical objectivity.

Another factor which hinders good relationships between Jews and Christians is the persistent, though frequently quite unconscious, hankering after uniformity. People are not yet reconciled to differences. In fact, the trend of the world today is sharply away from a toleration of differences and in the direction of rigid *Gleichschaltung*, co-ordination and regimentation. Men talk of unity, whilst in their hearts there is really a passion for regimentation. In order to have an harmonious social order they assume that all people must think alike and act alike. This dislike of the unlike often degenerates into active resentment, and anti-Semites exploit it as did Haman in olden days: "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their customs are different from those of every people . . . Therefore it profiteth not the King to suffer them."

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

There are some high-minded men in our country who would rightfully resent any charge of intolerance, but who are nevertheless contributing quite unconsciously to that very intolerance which they repudiate by their fond hankering after what they call American and social and cultural unification. They are opposed to the continued existence in American society of various social groups who retain their distinctive racial or cultural individualities. They insist that there must be only one cultural group in America, one thoroughgoing cultural co-ordination. They regard all group distinctions as socially baneful. The Jewish group is therefore criticized for its separatism, its solidarity, and its refusal to assimilate.

Cultural uniformity, however, should not be regarded as a prerequisite for an harmonious American democratic society. Such uniformity is not intrinsically desirable, and co-operation and good will in common national tasks are possible in spite of the existence of differences.

When it is maintained that the self-consciousness of the Jewish community in this country has been socially undesirable, the Jew has a right to ask: "Wherein has it been undesirable?" Have the Jews refused to participate in the life of the nation as citizens? Have they refused to send their children to the public schools and institutions of higher learning? Have they preferred to isolate themselves in parochial schools or denominational

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

colleges? Are they not represented largely in all the arts, sciences and professions? Are not Jewish business men eager to join in all the American social and business groups, the lodges and fraternal organizations wherever they are welcome? Have Jews refused to enter non-Jewish social clubs or professional associations when invited? Have Jewish workingmen failed to join the labor movement in this country? Have not Jewish communities pooled their philanthropic efforts in common Community Chests? Have Jews not shared in all the national movements making for the enrichment of our common life? Wherein has the group consciousness of the Jews been socially baneful? What socially desirable activities in American life have Jews refused to share in? Wherein is the Jew holding back? In what way does the desire of the Jew to care for his own dependents, because he understands them best, or to organize for the defense of his persecuted brethren throughout the world, or to teach his children the history and language of his race along with those of his country, or to assist in the upbuilding of a Homeland where the homeless of his race and the culture of his race may find a haven, and his national status normalized among the nations of the earth, or to preserve the beautiful customs of his people which are at one and the same time religious and social in character—in what way are these arts and interests “focal centers of rebellion” against the common

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

social good, and in what way do they interfere with the common life? Why has not the Jew or any individual in a free democracy the right to live his own life in his own way so long as—to quote John Stuart Mill—"he does not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or indeed their efforts to obtain it?"

When it is claimed that if the Jew would only surrender everything except his personal religion, anti-Semitic tendencies would disappear, and all would be well with him, the fact must be pointed out that the German Jews, for decades, practiced that very theory of assimilation. They tried in all ways *not* to be different. Their group consciousness dwindled to a vanishing point. Intermarriage was widespread. There was very easy egress for the group and no ingress to speak of. Many joined the Christian Church or became "Konfessionloss." And yet—such is the patent bankruptcy of this whole thesis—the most virulent anti-Semitism in the world developed in Germany; and in the place of a self-willed group distinction, a legal and prescriptive difference was forced upon them. Even Christian clergymen who had Jewish grandfathers and who certainly never suffered from Jewish group consciousness were stigmatized and outlawed in this land of classic Jewish assimilation.

Cultural uniformity is just as disastrous a slogan to raise in modern society as racial uniformity. In fact, the one inevitably leads to the other.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

In Nazi Germany they were merged into one. Too many human ideals are being broken in our day upon the wheel of totalitarian obsessions, for men who value individualism and exalt personality, to permit themselves to champion unification in American life. We must learn to accept differences and to find bases of co-operation and spiritual unity in spite of these differences and because of them. The allegiance of the Jew as a citizen to his country is direct and immediate, not through his group. Whatever other supplementary loyalties he may have to religion or ancestral memories or culture—and few men are without such subsidiary loyalties—his transcendent and basic loyalty is to America.

The Jew played a part in the discovery of this country, in its settlement and development, and its economic and political progress. The Jew in America played a not ignoble part in its art, literature, and science, in its social and educational movements, in peace and in war. He wishes to be permitted to carry on unmolested. He asks for no favors. He deserves no disfavors. He is eager to co-operate with all his neighbors. He is not clannish, except when intolerance forces clannishness upon him. The Jew in America should not be put on the defensive. He should not be forced to spend his energies in counterpropaganda or in apologetics. It is not good for him. It is not good for America. He should not be forced to fight for those rights

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

which are his, as well as those of every other American citizen, by virtue of the basic law of the land, rights which are his inalienably.

The problem of anti-Semitism should not be oversimplified. It would be an oversimplification to say that all anti-Semitism is due to religious differences and to religious intolerance. If that were the case, anti-Semitism would be on the wane today, because people do not fight as bitterly about religion today as they used to. One can be very tolerant about matters one cares little about . . . The problem today has become greatly aggravated and complicated because of the world-wide attack, now on in full fury, upon the whole Judaeo-Christian tradition and upon all classic spiritual values of Judaism and Christianity. This cardinal fact should be borne steadily in mind. The basic traditions of Judaism and Christianity—the rights of the individual, the one universal moral law, the brotherhood of men, universal peace—these are fighting for their very life today, with their backs to the wall. As the doctrines of neopaganism spread abroad in the world, racial hatreds are bound to be intensified. For racial antagonism is the very sign and symbol of the new order of ideas which is being foisted upon mankind. Anti-Semitism represents today a menace not merely to Jew and Judaism, but in a very real sense, to Christian and Christianity. Anti-Semitism is the symbol of the Anti-Christ.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

Jewish persecution is usually the forerunner of wide-scale persecution of other minorities and peoples. Jews seldom suffer alone. Thus the Jews were exiled from Spain in 1492 by a combination of religious bigotry and nationalistic intolerance. But simultaneously, the Mohammedans also were expelled from Spain. And it was not very long before this same religious intolerance was carried by the armies of Spain into the Netherlands, and under Charles V and Philip II, it swept with blood and horror, with sack and massacre, through the Christian Lowlands. The Inquisition which at first devoted itself exclusively to Jewish Marranos, soon drew into its net also Mohammedan Moriscos and Christian heretics.

Strangely enough, those who fan race prejudices are the very ones who in the long run pay the greatest price for it. The negro problem in the United States caused a Civil War in which half a million white men—not negroes—laid down their lives to solve the problem which the white man had created. The case of the Jewish persecutions in Germany is not dissimilar. The Nazis started on the Jews, but they did not stop there. The Jews were their first refugees but not their last. Today the highways of Europe are choked with millions of Aryan refugees, Dutch, Belgian, Polish, French and English. The great empire of England has had to send many of its children far away from home to distant places of refuge. Race prejudice is a dag-

## IN THE MIDST OF MANY PEOPLES

ger wielded by desperadoes and strikes blindly and savagely on all sides.

In view of this common danger, Judaism and Christianity face today a common task to defend a common heritage. Together they must build dykes against the flood of the new barbarism which is sweeping over the earth. They will do that best if they get to know each other better and if they gain more confidence in one another. There are only a few countries left where this can still be done. In this good land of ours this can still be done. Ours is a land in which there is room for all. The progress and well-being of any one group need not be purchased here at the expense of any other group. Ours is not a country but a continent. God has blessed this land with plenty and abundance. We have also been blessed with a noble tradition of self-government and free institutions. For a century and a half we have been able to solve all our problems—some of them very serious ones—without sacrificing our democratic way of life. It remains to be seen whether Jews and Christians can successfully meet their new and greatest testing hour and can co-operate to make secure for the future the kind of a civilization which Moses, Isaiah, Micah and Jesus visioned. It is from this larger aspect that the whole problem of Christian-Jewish relationship should be viewed.

## The Prophet and His People

### I

WHEN speaking of the prophet we have in mind, of course, the authentic, classic prophet who knew himself to be a "servant of God," commissioned to carry the "word of God" to the nation or to those who controlled its destinies. He may have been a historic descendant of the earlier Nebiim, the seers, diviners, or interpreters of signs and dreams. He may have possessed some residual traces of their earlier techniques. But it is clear that the band of bacchantic Nebiim whom Saul met "coming down from the high place with a psaltery and a timbrel, and a pipe, and harp before them" prophesying, and whipping themselves into a sacred madness so that "they stripped off their clothes and lay naked all the day and all the night," had as little in common with the Nabi who announced that "the spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to bring good tidings unto the humble . . . to bind up the broken-hearted . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives and the

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

opening of the eyes to them that are bound" as the astrologer has in common with the astronomer, or the modern chemist with the Medieval alchemist. The label "Nabi" remains but it is now new wine in new bottles. Amos resents the label and would like to dissociate himself from that nomenclature, though he insists on functioning as a prophet. Jeremiah would like to purge prophecy even of the last vestige of the dream-vision, which was long regarded as the least objectionable vehicle of revelation, for "What," said he, "hath the chaff to do with the wheat?" He demands a new terminology which will sharply distinguish the true and direct revelation of the world of God—the "answer of the Lord" and the "word of the Lord," from the traditional, cryptic "burden of the Lord" which was artificially induced by numerous psycho-physical devices.

None sensed the sharp break with traditional prophecy and the new departure which they inaugurated as much as the classic prophets themselves. They belonged to a new order; and in them the strong individualism and the pervasive democracy of ancient Israel are most powerfully reflected.

Unlike the earlier Nebiim, they did not belong to bands of brotherhoods. Their powers did not derive from any formal initiation into a professional fellowship which was possessed of some occult science and which was connected with some

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

altar or sanctuary. As long as the Nebiim remained members of a school, they persisted as the monitors of the divinatory traditions of some cult. It was only after the individual abstracted himself from the group and stood out alone, unattached and unallied, and became conscious of a personal and direct divine communication, that the classic prophet was born. The "aloneness" of the prophet is frequently pointed out in the Bible. Moses receives his revelation alone in the wilderness. Elijah travels a day's journey out into the wilderness where his revelation comes to him; and again after forty days' wandering in the wilderness, while at Mt. Horeb, Jeremiah sits alone "because God's hand is upon him." The prophet trod the wine-press alone . . .

The prophet had no teacher and no disciple whom he trained to succeed him. Prophecy, unlike priesthood, was neither an office nor a profession. It was not inherited or transmitted. The prophet was a single human being, one of the countless unordained many, belonging to no special privileged class, whom God chose, in a way quite unmistakable to the chosen one, to transmit His will to men. The reason for his particular choice remained a mystery to the chosen one. Often the prophet rebels at this choice. The hand of God, laid upon him, is too heavy. He feels himself too young, too inexperienced for the mission. Or, having taken the first few steps upon the hard and

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

broken road which the prophet of God must walk, he finds his mission too difficult. Men hated, mocked and persecuted him for the word of God which he brought to them. He feels himself trapped and enticed. He wants to run away, or at least to keep silent. But the word of God is like a burning fire shut up in his bones, and he only wearies himself to hold it in, for he cannot. "The prophet who suppresses his vision," declared the Rabbis of a later age, "deserves death at the hands of Heaven."

Just how he became aware of his selection also remained a mystery to him. It happened, that was clear. It was a sudden and unexpected phenomenon. There was no deliberate preparation for it. The prophet did not induce it through any exercises of a psychological-corporeal kind. Deep down within his soul much may have been going on for a long time, of which he may have been quite unaware. But the revelation itself is an act of grace, emanating from without and not from within. It is not achieved by the prophet through the conscious fulfillment of certain prerequisites. The rationalistic philosopher, Maimonides, contended that prophecy required preparation, and that the prerequisites for it were mental, moral and imaginative (intuitive) perfection. But this is nowhere indicated in the Bible.

When the revelation once takes place it remains an unforgettable and transforming experience. The

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

prophet knows that he has been in direct communion with God. He has received a clear message, not a mysterious oracle requiring decoding, but a message of clear cognitional content. And the miracle of it is that he, a man, belonging to no cast of holy men, possessed of no divine "gifts" and without any previous conscious conditioning, has been singled out as the channel for a divine revelation to mankind. He, an ordinary individual, was now possessed of a spiritual authority superseding that of cult, priesthood and tradition. He has suddenly been raised and set "over the nations and the kingdoms to root out and pull down, to destroy, to overthrow, to build and to plant." With the classic prophet, the impersonal and anonymous religious functionary of some local deity and shrine yields to the strong, religious personality of distinctive character who transcends shrine and cult. "And God said unto Moses: I am that I am . . . this is My name forever." God is named, and His prophet is named. Deep calls unto deep, God's personality to man's . . . Man rises to the dignity of a conscious agent of God, designated by God because of His necessity to employ man in the fulfillment of His plan. The folkist stage in religious evolution comes to an end. Here now is Man, a definitive person in a historical setting, redeemed from what has been called the "brutal solidarity of ancient times," called by name and raised to

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

heights of ineffable spiritual greatness where he is permitted to see God, as it were, face to face.

Spiritual religion is not an automatic folk creation, or the unconscious evolution of a primitive religious culture played upon by the cross-currents of political and economic forces. No constellation of social factors and no impact of historical events produced prophecy. Spiritual religion is the product of revelation—a series of revelations—of God, through man, to mankind. The personal God speaks through a personal man to a society composed of free personal agents who are summoned to co-operate with God in the realization of a perfect society. The source is always God, not man. What the prophet proclaims is not a private critique of traditional morality but a message from God. What is revealed is like Heavenly food given to the prophet to eat. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them," is the way Jeremiah expresses it. Ezekiel uses the same metaphor: "And Thou, son of man, open thy mouth, and eat that which I give thee."

It is God's will which determines the occasion and chooses the men who are to be the vehicles for the revelations. The individuals chosen must, of course, be fit instruments for the message which they are to transmit. One cannot play a perfect melody upon an imperfect instrument. Nor is it to be assumed that the individual thus chosen remains just an unconscious instrument, and auto-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

matic transmitter. To proclaim the message of God to a violently resistant world, to men who are of a "hard forehead and of a stiff heart" requires conscious courage, conviction, fervor, faith, spiritual passion and a capacity for suffering of the first order. The prophet must interpret the message which he receives, as a great artist interprets the musical composition of a great composer. He must give a faithful, penetrating, reverent and creative rendition of the creator's manifest intent. The prophet was far more than a conduit for ideas received. He himself became intellectually and emotionally involved in them. His task was not only to transmit and to proclaim, but to redeem! Often the experiences of the prophet's own private life became the occasion of a revelation from God. The prophet himself became the parable. His personal trials and sufferings are employed by God as the plastic material out of which a spiritual revelation of universal significance is fashioned. In such instances, the personality of the prophet glowingly interpenetrates his prophecy, and thereby becomes a revelation not merely of divinity, but also of humanity.

But the prophet was never submerged in his prophecy. His personality was never extinguished in that of God. There was no dissolution of the prophet's ego. There was a surrender to the will of God, but not a surrender of identity. The gulf between "Thou" and "I," between God and man,

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

remains.<sup>1</sup> The prophet was not a mystic. He reached out for no ecstatic identification of self with God, no apotheosis. He did not pursue the "via purgativa"—the mystic's way of self-abasement and self-mortification in an effort to free himself from the shackles of selfhood. He always remained himself, even after he had been chosen. He even found himself, at times, in sharp mental colloquy with God, critical because unenlightened, concerning God's management of His Universe. To perform adequately that which he was commissioned to do required continuous re-enforcement of his inner life, the consolidation of his personality. For his life was a life of swords. Skill in attack, resourcefulness in controversy, impressiveness in utterance, subtlety in technique—all that and much more (for one should not underestimate the practical sagacity of the prophets, nor fail to make allowance for a large measure of sophistication) has to be added to their matchless courage in order to understand their rugged and powerful natures. Here are no wistful dreamers or devotees of the contemplative life. Here are no self-consuming mystics, seeking release from *Sang-sára*, from the coils of experience and the cycles of birth and death. These are men of strife and contention. These men struck at life and life struck back at them. They were always "against

<sup>1</sup> See Ezekiel Kaufman, *Toledot Ha-Emunah Ha-Yisraelit*, III, pp. 709-37.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

this house and against this city." They were in an arena, fighting with every available weapon. Their speech was at times very bitter, and their invectives like scorpion whips. They spared no one, except those whom God would spare—the weak, the poor, the denied, the broken. The prophets reasoned, pleaded, challenged, mocked, threatened, cursed. They would not compromise on moral absolutes. They were like "an iron pillar and brazen walls."

Strong, passionate, self-possessed, dynamic individuals were these prophets, men of an heroic and monumental mold, in whose hearts was "the tumult of the mighty harmonies" of God . . .

Neither the idealist Plato, nor the rationalist Aristotle, nor the mystic Plotinus was intellectually or emotionally involved in his own ethical system. Their moral speculations resulted in no compelling sense of personal mission to champion the cause of the poor or the dispossessed. "The perfect life of the sage (according to Plotinus) is not in community but in detachment. If he undertakes practical activity, it must be from some plain obligation, and the attitude of detachment ought still to be maintained internally. Neither with Plotinus nor with any of his successors is there the least doubt that the contemplative life is in itself superior to the life of action. Here they are Aristotelian. The chance that the philosopher as such

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

may be called on to reform practical life seems to them much more remote than it did to Plato.”<sup>2</sup>

The cultivated pagans, generally, took their religion lightly. No Greek or Roman ever died for his religion. Socrates, as Carlyle pointed out, was terribly at ease in Zion . . . The prophets, on the other hand, were essentially men of mission, seeking neither personal salvation nor inner peace, but burdened with the sense of having been sent to reconstruct society after the pattern of divine justice and mercy. Their revelations concerned neither the nature of God nor cosmic mysteries. They revealed no “secrets,” no particular “Gnosis.” Their revelations concerned exclusively the pure worship of the one, spiritual and universal God, the moral conduct of men—justice, love, brotherhood, peace—and the life of men and nations in the processes of history.

Neither were the prophets apocalyptic visionaries despairing of ever reforming society and awaiting the cataclysmic intervention of God to usher in a new and miraculous order of things. The prophets did indeed vision an “End of Days,” suffused in glory and blessedness, when the things which they were struggling to achieve would actually come to pass, when the good would finally triumph over the evil, “when the earth would be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists* (Cambridge, 1928), pp. 92-3.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

cover the sea." But this blessed consummation will result not from any divine intervention but from the labors and moral exertions of countless generations of men.

Strong individuals themselves, they believed in absolute individual moral responsibility. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were not the first of the prophets to reject the ethics of the proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge," and to proclaim that "every one shall die for his own iniquity." At the very heart of prophecy is the conviction that God can be worshipped and known only through the moral aspirations of the individual, and that moral guilt and merit are individual achievements. Thus while rejecting all inherited "tabu" guilt, they absolved no one of his just share of responsibility for the moral guilt of the nation. No one could unload his measure of responsibility upon the community. Kings, princes, priests, prophets and common people are all joined together in the prophets' indictment of national transgression. All must meet by the same watercourse of responsibility, for all are free moral agents. "I have made thee this day a fortified city . . . against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes, against the priests, and against the people of the land." Not merely the leaders are to blame for misleading the people, but the people also for allowing themselves to be misled. "An appalling and

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

horrible thing is come to pass in the land: The prophets prophesy in the service of falsehood, and the priests bear rule at their beck; and my people love to have it so."

No prophet tried to monopolize the mandate of prophecy. They claimed no vested interests, no hierarchic exclusiveness. When Eldad and Medad began to prophesy in the camp, Joshua cried out to Moses: "My Lord Moses, shut them in!" But Moses, the prophet supreme, replied: "Art thou jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His spirit upon them." Priests were always very jealous of their rights and privileges. Every one not of the priestly class was a "stranger" whose very touch contaminated the sacred vessels, and whose attempts at performing priestly functions was sacrilege and punishable by death. The prophets wished for all men the privilege of becoming prophets, men and women alike. There were no women in the priesthood, but there was more than one woman prophet in ancient Israel. The prophets longed for a rich outpouring of the spirit of God upon all flesh. There were many prophets in Israel. The Rabbis, employing their favorite device of hyperbole, drive home this fact by declaring that besides the prophets whose prophecies are recorded in Scriptures, there were as many more as the number of people who were delivered from Egypt—sixty myriads. Their

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

prophecies, however, though timely were not timeless, and were accordingly not written down. The prophets' religious democracy looked to the time when even the priestly functions would be the prerogatives of all, and not merely of the descendants of Aaron. In that superb prologue to the theophany at Mt. Sinai where the supreme revelation in the history of Israel took place, one hears the majestic accents of this great hope: "And ye shall be unto me a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation." The Rabbis of later times retained this democratic religious tradition of the prophets: "If Israel had not sinned through worshipping the Golden Calf, there would be among them no caste of priests; the entire nation would have been a nation of priests; and it was only after their sin that the greater part of the people lost the right to priesthood."

The prophets thought in terms of men and not of institutions, whether sacred or secular. They were not authoritarian as regards forms of social control. They did not believe in absolute forms of government or institutions which completely submerged the individual. Revelation always emancipates man. It gives him an authority which transcends all social disciplines and controls. The democratic movements of the Western World in the last few centuries following the Reformation owe their rise to a returning faith in progressive revelation and inner illumination—the prophetic tradition.

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

tion. These movements are perishing in our day because of the pessimism of our age, its loss of confidence in the individual, due to loss of faith in the reality of revelation in the life of man. The basic charter of man's dignity and freedom is God and revelation. No human society can long remain Godless and free. The revelation of Sinai was engraved on tablets of stone. "Call it not 'engraved' (*harut*)," said the Rabbis, "call it 'freedom' (*herut*)."

But while the prophets did not believe in infallible institutions of total control, and were fully aware of the dangers of what we call institutionalism, they were not hostile to them as such, either to the Temple, the priesthood, the state, the cult, the ritual, or the Law. They were not revolutionary in any organizational sense, political or economic. They did not preach community of goods, or socialism, or non-co-operation with civil or religious authorities. They were not pacifists. But they subordinated institutions to the purposes to which they were devoted. Institutions were means, not ends. Whenever an institution thwarted its purpose, it was to be reformed or, if necessary, abolished. The Temple, as a spiritual center to which all nations will go in order to learn the ways of God and from which will go forth the Law and the word of God, excites the prophet Isaiah to exaltation. The Temple, as a den of robbers, to which unrepentant malefactors of society

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

flock in order to derive reassurance and deliverance in spite of their abominations, arouses Jeremiah's wrath and forces from his lips an imprecation and a prophecy of doom. Similarly, the priest is not condemned because of his office but because of the abuse of his office. Ezekiel was a priest; Jeremiah, the son of a priest. Prophecy and priesthood, though frequently in conflict with one another, are essentially complementary functions in religion. One represents the spirit, the other the organization; one the explorer, the other the settler. The priest is "the messenger of the Lord of hosts," declared Malachi, and people "should seek the law at his mouth." It is only those priests who wait for a man "as troops of robbers," who "teach for hire," who scatter and destroy their flock, that are the targets of the prophet's attack. The celebration of festivals, new moon, sabbath and the holding of convocations are not condemned as such, but only when the hands of the worshippers are full of blood. God "cannot endure iniquity along with the solemn assembly." The prophets are least sparing in their attack on sacrifices, but even here the dominant thought is that they are a burden unto God, because, as Deutero-Isaiah put it, the sacrificer is burdened with sin. In the same way, the prophets did not attack wealth, as such, but greed and exploitation; not power, but its abuse; not customs and ceremonies, but their assumed sacramental character; not ritual, but the dogma of

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

"opus operatum." They did not spend themselves in fighting external forms. The inner intent—the harmony of act and motive; the inner illumination—the harmony of purpose and destiny; the heart of man responding to the will of God—these and these alone concerned them. They believed in human equality, in every man's inalienable worth and spiritual dignity—every man having been fashioned in the image of God—in every man's right to be free, under God, from oppression and exploitation, and in every man's duty to obey the universal moral imperatives.

The prophets did not conceive of themselves as the creators of a new religion. The prophets of the ninth and eighth centuries did not originate ethical monotheism. They did not come as innovators. They were conscious of an older source of their faith. They and their contemporaries were aware of a long established covenant with Yahweh, the sole creator of heaven and earth, whose worship entailed great moral disciplines.

The origin of this faith was generally identified with the saga of the Exodus, with Moses, and the revelation at Mt. Sinai. The later Rabbis expressed this fact by declaring that the revelation of the first two commandments—those concerning the existence and unity of God, and the prohibition of idolatry—were heard directly by all the people. They did not require the intercession even of the greatest of all the prophets, Moses.

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

The prophets refer frequently to a Torah, a law of God, which was evidently well known in their day. The prophet Hosea charges the people with having forgotten this law of God. Isaiah charges them with having rejected it. Jeremiah chides his people because they say: "We are wise, and the Law of the Lord is with us," whereas the pen of the scribes had wrought in vain because they have rejected the word of the Lord.

The prophets regarded themselves, rather, as men who in a grave hour of national crisis had received a compelling revelation to warn the people to repent and return. They do not address themselves to individuals about private or personal matters, as did the earlier Nebiim. They address themselves to the nation as a whole, and to those who controlled its affairs, and utter the sad, deep truths which men would rather not hear.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others of the prophets speak of their prophecies as alarming trumpet-calls in times of danger and war. "Shall the horn be blown in a city and the people not tremble, The lion hath roared, who will not hear, The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophecy."

They are sent to marshal the spiritual forces of the nation against impending disaster, wrought by moral corruption in high and low places. God wishes to save the people, if they wish to be saved. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken."

But salvation can come only through inner spiritual cleansing, through thoroughgoing reform and fundamental renewal. "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

Their ethical emphasis and their insistence on the primacy of ethics are superb. National guilt, calling for condign punishment, is incurred not only by "religious" transgressors, by those who forsake Yahweh and worship other Gods or by those who worship Yahweh along with other Gods—a fact which was generally conceded even if not generally heeded—but also by those who grind the faces of the poor, who buy the needy for a pair of shoes, who join house to house and field to field till there be no room for men to dwell in, who make the ephah small and the shekel great, who sell refuse for corn and who oppress the stranger, the fatherless and the widow.

National destiny was thus made dependent upon loyalty to moral ideals—to very exacting moral ideals. A nation cannot survive—nay more, a nation should not survive—which does violence to the divine law of justice and compassion.

The prophets loved their nation. They were

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

great patriots. Because Elijah was zealous only for the honor of God and not of Israel, he was commanded by God to anoint Elisha to be prophet in his stead.<sup>8</sup> They were not always hard and forbidding, writing "with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond." They could speak with infinite tenderness and exquisite love of their people. No patriot ever felt for his nation a deeper and more glowing devotion than Hosea. Even when they chastised their people they yearned for them with an overwhelming love. When Jeremiah, said the Rabbis, was commanded by God to take the cup of wine of fury at His hand and make the people of Israel drink of it, he cursed the day that he was born. "I am like the High Priest," he said, "who has to administer 'the waters of bitterness' to a woman under suspicion of adultery, and when he approaches the woman to make her drink, he beholds—his own mother."

The prophets could comfort when the hurt was great. In darkness and in exile they could kindle the bright lamps of hope in the hearts of weary men. *Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people . . . Arise, shine, for thy light is come . . .* When

<sup>8</sup> Mekilta, "Bo," p. 2a: ed. I. H. Weiss. See also sharp criticism of Elijah's lack of charity and intolerance of his people's shortcomings in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, Chap. 8, p. 186: ed. Friedmann. In Rabbinic literature the stern, inexorable Elijah emerges as a benevolent patron saint, concerned with things gentler than justice, as the compassionate friend who appears in every crisis and pleads for his people and helps it. He also helps individual men and women who are in distress. See Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1913), IV, pp. 195-233.

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee . . . Fear ye not, neither be afraid . . . I will not chide forever, nor will I always be wroth . . . I will make thy transgression to vanish like a mist . . . I will turn your captivity and gather you from all the nations . . . Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people . . . Fear not! . . .

But strong as was their love for their people, stronger was their love for God and their loyalty to His moral law. God's moral law comes first and it permits no exemptions on the ground of patriotism. Not my country right or wrong, but my country right or—perish! "Execute justice in the morning and deliver the spoiled out of the land of the oppressor, lest my fury go forth like fire and burn that none can quench it." The state is not above the law, nor is any ruler or class. The moral law overarches all, and is binding upon all. King Saul and David and Ahab and Rehoboam and Baasa and Zedekiah, all were confronted by the same unsparing and impartial law out of the mouths of these relentless prophets who themselves possessed no authority, office or force, except such as derives from the moral law itself. When the modern world came to think of moral laws as social mores and traced their origin to human convenience, it prepared the ground for a new subjugation of man to new forms of tyranny and oppressions. The totalitarian state is quite prop-

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

erly, by virtue of the philosophy which made it possible, a law unto itself, and therefore a violence and desolation unto all who live within it.

Men feared and hated these prophets. They accepted the facts of prophecy, but they preferred the well-behaved prophets, the professional "sons of the prophets," who knew how to winnow with every wind and who understood what was expected of them. It is all very well to bring messages from God—but there is, after all, such a thing as tact and propriety. One should not be a "troubler of Israel"—that was Ahab's description of Elijah. One should not step on the toes of people, or offend the authorities or cause people to lose their confidence in their lay and ecclesiastical superiors. It may be all right for a rude sheep-grazer and dresser of trees like Amos to preach his fanatical ideas among the wild hill-folk of Judea, but he is shockingly out of place here, at the king's sanctuary and the royal house at Bethel, declared Amaziah, the High Priest, who knew all the proprieties. When the nation clamored for war, the prophet should bring it an inspiring message of victory. When the people crowded the courts of the Temple, bringing their generous offerings, and contributing to the support of so many deserving priests, one should not deride or insult them for their pains, or remind them, at such an inappropriate time, of their dirty moral lives. What is the world coming to when a hairy man out of the

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

desert, girt with a girdle of leather about his loins, dares to face a king, a king, mind you, and a queen, and dares to tell them that the dogs shall eat them and lick their blood, because, forsooth, they had pushed through, in the customary manner of royalty, a little matter of expropriating a piece of land which belonged to a commoner!

And so the prophets, these scourges over human sin and complacency, were hated, despised, persecuted and slain. They did not carry much weight in their day. Here and there, at a decisive moment, a prophet did succeed in affecting the course of his people's destiny, but as a rule, they were completely ignored. They were not, however, completely forgotten. Their words and their deeds echoed down the ages. When their words came true, men recalled them and beat their breasts in contrition for having "made their hearts as an adamant stone, so as not to hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His spirit by the hand of the former prophets."

## II

Classic prophecy began to die out with the dispersion of the people. The fact of exile entered into the life of the race. A haunting sadness settled over its spirit, and it quenched the creative fires. The Shekinah, declared the Rabbis, does not descend

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

upon a man—or a race—when he is depressed. The new generation which had returned from exile faced other problems and tasks, and required a different type of spiritual leadership—that of the sage rather than that of the prophet. The conviction grew that a broken and chastised people, struggling desperately with the hard tasks of reconstruction and survival, required the calm, practical guidance of the Hacham, the Sage, rather than the stab of conscience and the troubling challenge of the Prophet. The Will of God was henceforth to be found revealed in the Written Book, to be lovingly interpreted by a Scribe or a Rabbi. The “Bat Kol”—the Heavenly Voice which revealed things hidden from human knowledge—remained to fill the void left by prophecy, which according to the Rabbis, was one of the five things which disappeared with the destruction of the Temple, and which will not reappear again until the days of the Messiah. But even the “Bat Kol” came to be discounted as an authentic and dependable source of religious law and truth.<sup>4</sup> An extreme school even maintained, and for definite polemical reasons, to be sure, that ever since the destruction of the Temple, prophecy was left to children and fools. But then, even in Hosea’s day they called the prophet a fool . . .

<sup>4</sup> Cf. The great controversy between Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and the sages. The latter refused to accept his version of the law even though a Bat Kol from heaven declared that Rabbi Eliezer was correct. (Bab. Mez. 59b).

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

Not all, however, agreed with them. The fact of prophecy persisted down the ages and appears over and over again among peoples, especially among those who were affected by the teachings of the Bible. When it did, it stirred deep waters and set new currents in motion. Men felt again the intoxication of great, new beginnings. Trumpets blew again on new horizons . . .

There are prophets today, and, as of old, they are little heeded and greatly persecuted. Occasionally they are found inside the Rabbinate and the ministry, more often outside. The training for the ministry is not necessarily a preparation for a prophetic role, any more than the priest of old was trained to be a prophet. The prophet did not preside over a congregation, or occupy a pulpit, or instruct the youth, or work through and with an organized fellowship of men. There is much to be said for the minister who is the faithful teacher, guide and pastor—a shepherd not too far ahead of his flock. It is an honorable and indispensable profession in the life of society. He, too, does God's work in the world—and an important work it is. By their service they are training generations of men to reach up to the high moral absolutes which the prophets proclaimed.

All ministers who take into their ministry the quality and substance of the prophet's message, if not his unique experience and his propelling sense of mission—who remain true to the idea which

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

the prophets set for the priest, to teach the law and declare the judgment, his lips keeping knowledge and men seeking the law out of his mouth—along to the holy covenant of an everlasting priesthood.

Those men, however, who are more than teachers, preachers and pedagogues, who are privileged to see the vision of God with “open eyes,” who are singled out by the hand of God for proclamation and renewal, “to destroy and to rebuild,” and who at the behest of their vision, are content to leave their back to the smiter, and to remain lonely and friendless, asking for no reward but the nearness of God, seeking no Heaven but the light of His countenance—these are the prophets. They are the men, “inexpressibly gigantic, beautiful, columnar,” who, visioning a new social order of justice, love, brotherhood and peace, are prepared to use their blood and tears—theirs, not those of other men—to cement it. It is by the hand of such prophets that the Lord brings peoples out of slavery, even as He brought Israel out of Egypt, and by such prophets are they kept. Such prophets are found in every age, a few in number, and in every walk of life, among priests as well as among laymen. They require no ordination. They know when the voice calls: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And they answer quite simply, or after long and troubled hesitation, “Here am I, send me!”

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

Such men, the Rabbis say, receive, each one of them, a drop from the waters of Paradise . . .

### III

The prophets dreamt great dreams for their people, not as military conquerors but as spiritual servants of mankind. They brought them the gift of suffering for great ideals. A covenant of destiny had been established between God and Israel at Sinai. Israel had been chosen by God, "betrothed unto Him in faithfulness." This imposed upon Israel no material favors, only the precious obligations of faithfulness. Alone among the idolatrous nations of the earth to recognize the true nature of God, Israel was bound by the very fact of that exclusive recognition to constancy and to an exceptional loyalty to God. By the same token it was subject to an exceptional retribution for any acts of disloyalty: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities."

In post-exilic times this concept of election was still further deepened by the motif of mission. The prophets put the mantle of their own destiny upon their people Israel. Israel was to be a prophetic people, not because the spirit of divine prophecy had now come to rest on Israel collectively,

## THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

whereas previously it had been vouchsafed only to isolated individuals,<sup>5</sup> but because the people, now widely scattered over a far-flung Diaspora, could become, even as the prophets themselves were, the messengers of God, to bring His word and His truth to the Gentiles. Tried in the furnace of affliction and refined by suffering, Israel could become a witness to the peoples, a light to the nations.

Whether Israel has fulfilled this mission in history, whether it actually has been "in the midst of many peoples as dew from the Lord, as shower upon the grass," let the great social movements of mankind which felt the impact of Israel's dynamic spirit through the ages, surging and creative in living men and women, bear witness. Let the Cross and the Crescent bear witness—for they kindled their torches at the sacred fires of Israel's altars. Let the Renaissance and the Reformation and the American Revolution bear witness—for they too felt the dynamic drive of the Hebraic spirit. Let all the mighty movements for reform and righteousness in our day bear witness. "As long as the world lasts all who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel for inspiration, as to the people who have had the

<sup>5</sup> Judah Halevi, many centuries later, did develop such a theory. The Jews, according to Halevi, are especially privileged to attain to prophecy (*Cuzari* I, 101). The divine afflatus, the concentrated spiritual essence, descended in an unbroken line through Abraham to his descendants, and among the sons of Jacob it was first shared collectively (*Cuzari* I, 95). Israel is, in a sense, the repository of prophecy.

## THE PROPHET AND HIS PEOPLE

sense for righteousness most glowing and strongest.”<sup>6</sup>

A nation, as a whole, is of course never “prophetic.” But Israel fostered the great spiritual and humanitarian ideals of the prophets unremittingly through the ages. In school, home and synagogue the spirit of each succeeding generation was nurtured on them. They were thus kept alive for the great conjunctures and the explosive moments in human history. From time to time, some gifted son of Israel recaptured some of their ancient power and impetuosity, and through him they swept forward again as a powerful and fructifying social movement over the face of the earth.

It is this prophetic ferment in the soul of the race, as real in the modern as in the ancient world, which the enemies of Israel and mankind most dread. It is also the testament of Israel’s immortality!

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma* (New York, 1899), p. 50.







